EXPLORING EMPLOYER BRANDING TO ENHANCE DISTINCTIVENESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to offer a methodological contribution to empirical studies on employer branding in higher education, exploring a framework to measure organizational attractiveness of higher education institutions and identifying particular features of employment experience that are most manifested, valued by and significant to their employees. Specifically, this paper reports the results of research undertaken in 19 Lithuanian higher education institutions (N = 1105) applying an 11 dimensional 67-item Organizational Attractiveness Extraction Scale (OAES). The findings indicate that work in academia is predominantly driven by interesting, intellectually challenging work, attentive supervision and good relationships. This study corroborates the findings of previous research that higher education institutions face lowering salaries, increasing work load and occupational stress, and deepening culture of mistrust. The paper also aims at operationalizing labor market identities of higher education institutions as a meaningful strategy for establishing distinctiveness and developing employer branding strategies. To that end, cluster analysis based on employee perceptions of employment experience in higher education institutions has been carried out and produced four attitudinal segments, and, consequently, derived four groups of organizational identities. The study also demonstrates that data does significantly differentiate between types of higher education institutions, i.e.

surveyed universities and colleges. Implications and recommendations for the employer brand development in higher education are presented.

Keywords: Employer branding, labor market identities, organizational attractiveness, distinctiveness, higher education

Introduction

Realities of changing academic employment worldwide, affected by major developments of massification, globalisation, internationalisation, marketisation, managerialism, shifts in funding, increased emphasis on relevance of knowledge, diversification of higher education systems, and generation change (Enders and De Weert, 2009; Kogan and Teichler, 2007), have determined the deteriorating attractiveness of academic workplace (Enders and De Weert, 2004). Academic profession, continuously experiencing increasing work load, loss of status, external scrutiny and accountability, gradual diminution of professional self-regulation, remuneration issues, rush towards part-time and short-term contracts (Tytherleigh et al., 2005; Teichler and Hole, 2013; Enders and De Weert, 2004), is "under stress as never before" (Altbach et al., 2009: 1). As for the current challenges and trends, it is predicted that higher education will continue to face economic and political pressures, national and international competition, budget cuts, drop in student applications, a changing higher education landscape, and a heightened focus on quality assurance and efficiency (Anyangwe, 2012). Considering the fact that the demand for highly qualified employees will strongly increase in the years ahead and officially acknowledged potential of higher education to „help deliver jobs, prosperity, quality of life and global public goods" (European Commission, 2011: 2) it is crucial to ensure that academic workplace as a "substantial reservoir of knowledge, talent and energy" (European Commission, 2008: 11) will recover lost ground offering "working conditions appropriate to the academic environment that encourage creativity and innovation" (Enders and De Weert, 2004: 5). Therefore, while accommodating the turbulent environment, higher education institutions should rethink their human resource strategies and look for new approaches to effectively attract and retain best possible faculty and staff. For commonly higher education institutions have very limited possibilities to foster job attractiveness by financial means, building their strong *employer brands* – searching for core strengths and uniqueness of employment experience offered to and valued by employees, and positioning this *distinctiveness* in the labor market – could be a "secret sauce" and a leading strategy for organizational survival and success winning the war for talent. "A distinctive identity is the vehicle which enables an organization to achieve many of its strategic goals through

being memorable, authentic, and clearly articulating what it has to offer to the people that are important to it" (Distinct Higher Education, 2012: 4).

Employer branding, first coined by Ambler and Barrow (1996) and defined as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company" (p. 187), "represents organizations' efforts to communicate to internal and external audiences what makes it both desirable and different as an employer" (Jenner and Taylor, 2007). Although the field of employer branding has attracted much attention in the literature (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Berthon et al., 2005; Zaveri and Mulye, 2010; Mosley, 2007; Jiang and Iles, 2011; Shahzad et al., 2011), and has prompted a steady stream of articles, books, events, blogs and investigative pieces, it is – albeit with a few exceptions (Stensaker, 2007; Temple, 2006; Distinct Higher Education, 2012) – yet largely unexplored in higher education.

Meanwhile, evidence shows that building a salient employer brand undoubtedly stands for the most important element of finding the right talents (EB Insights, 2011), since people want to work for organizations with strong and positive reputation and prestige (Rousseau, 2008) in preference to higher wages, thus expecting a pride which will be provided by organizational membership (Cable and Turban, 2006). Employer branding also helps organizations to define the kind of the desired applicants, with right abilities and cultural fit in this way sifting out blank shots and increasing the number of high quality candidates. Eventually, employer branding helps to build a more consistent employment experience and communication (EB Insights, 2011), and retain current employees assuring their engagement in the culture and strategy of the company they work for (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Moreover, successful employer brand builds *distinctiveness* (Rosethorn and Mensink, 2007), which has been explicitly proven to be beneficial and "crucial for strength of reputation, financial stability, and much more" in higher education (Distinct Higher Education, 2012: 4). Differentiated employer proposition in higher education may include factors "ranging from institutional reputation, the depth of academic portfolio, the quality of infrastructure and institutional investment plans through to pragmatic issues such as pension provision, regional property prices and the quality of local schools" (Distinct Higher Education, 2012: 12). Whatever the assets, successful employer brand means making a choice. As Rosethorn and Mensink (2007) have put it, "No organization should be aiming to be all things to all people – different types of people are right for different types of companies"(p. 4). Thus, starting with self-understanding of "who are we?" higher education institutions get the floor to tell the true and compelling story of an organization's "forever and after". To invite potential employees

on a unique employment journey and make it come true. And, eventually to stand out from the crowd by differentiating itself as a desirable employer in the labour market.

Therefore it is the particular ambition of this study to offer a methodological contribution to empirical studies on employer branding in higher education, exploring a framework to measure organizational attractiveness of higher education institutions and identifying particular features of employment experience that are most manifested, valued and significant to their employees. The paper also explores how data differentiates between types of higher education institutions, namely universities and colleges, and examines whether different patterns of organizational attractiveness, which correlate with different missions might be delineated.

Furthermore, this paper addresses the issue of prevailing institutional homogenization in higher education (European Commission, 2011) and is pointed at enhancing distinctiveness and diversity that "has been identified in the higher education literature as one of the major factors associated with the positive performance of higher education systems" (Van Vught, 2008: 154).

Eventually, this paper presents an effort to tackle the task of defining and delineating higher education institutions based on employment relations they offer and labor market identities they possess. To that end, cluster analysis based on employee perceptions of employment experience in higher education institutions has been carried out suggesting theoretical and practical insights into employee segmentation and employer branding strategies.

Theoretical background

The conceptual framework of this study is based on theoretical perspectives of organizational ecology. Particularly, for the purposes of this research identity-based approach of organizational ecology is adopted (Hsu and Hannan, 2005; Hannan, 2005; Hannan et al., 2006; Pólos et al., 2002; Baron, 2004; Carroll and Khessina, 2005) with a particular focus on employment relations (Baron et al., 2001; Sørensen, 2004; Sørensen and Sorenson, 2007), concept and construction of authenticity (Baron, 2004; Carroll and Wheaton, 2009) and diversity in higher education (Van Vught, 2008; Reichert, 2009). Namely, the following insights and implications for conceptualizing employer branding in higher education derive from the studies above:

1) *Organizations in the same industry, covering the same range of occupations and conforming to the same labor law, nevertheless are not homogenous in their organizational designs and blueprints for the employment relation (Hannan, 2005).* Perhaps the most comprehensive illustration of this phenomenon is provided by the Stanford Project on

Emerging Companies (SPEC), launched in 1994 to explore the evolution of employment practices, organizational designs and business strategies of young high-technology companies in California's Silicon Valley (Baron et al., 2001). The study elaborated on three main dimensions of employment relations – attachment, coordination/control and selection. Blueprint analysis based on the above dimensions resulted in five basic model types for employment relations, namely *Engineering, Star, Commitment, Bureaucracy* and *Autocracy,* eventually having different effects on survival and turnover rates (Baron et al., 2001; Hannan, 2005; Hannan et al., 2006).

Organizations obviously differ in the complex array of employment experience features – economic and financial reward packages offered, fulfillment of socio-emotional needs, other tangible and intangible benefits provided to and valued by employees (Edwards, 2010). Accordingly, as G. Martin (2007: 21) states, "HR managers need to have a good theory or model of how employer branding works in their own organizations. What works in one organization or one industry sector may be quite different from what works in another. Context and the history of an organization matters in telling a novel, compelling, credible and sustainable story about an employer brand image". Therefore, while "diversification and individual institutional profiling are high on agendas across Europe" (Rauhvargers, 2011: 7), higher education institutions have to take their own path to employer branding discovering unique characteristics of their organizational identity, making them transparent and building on these strengths (European Commission, 2011). As Stensaker (2007: 15) suggests, "it is strategically important to create images that match the organizational identity of a given institution, and that the challenge for higher education institutions is to balance the need for adjusting to a changing world while maintaining their organizational identities and the inherent characteristics of higher education".

2) Although there is no "one best way" to manage employees (Bartram, 2011), nonetheless an organization's survival prospects are enhanced by coherent employment practices fostering reliability and accountability (Hannan et al., 2006; Baron et al., 2001). In other words, "selection favors organizational forms characterized by relatively inert procedures, structures and strategies", those operating "on the basis of routines that guide their functioning", complying with stable rules and procedures and showing high reproducibility (Van Witteloostuijn et al., 2003: 266). For example, inertia is increased through investments in personnel, encouragement and reward of "collective actions where people work together toward a common goal" (Welbourne and Andrews, 1996: 896), and putting more value on employees. Ecological theories of organizational inertia view organizations as having an identity-based 'core' which constitutes the most difficult organizational elements to alter, namely

"mission, form of authority, core technology (including employee skills), and marketing strategy (ways of relating to external constituencies)" (Hannan et al., 2006: 756). When it comes to an organization's identity in the labor market, it is constructed on particular cultural blueprints, employment systems, organizational culture and insiders' expectations about employment relationship (Baron, 2004; Hannan et al., 2006; Hsu and Hannan, 2005). Organizational identity, or its cultural codes and 'core' features, provides relevant audience members with default assumptions, expectations and beliefs about behavior and properties of the respective organization (Hsu and Hannan, 2005; Pólos et al., 2002). Violation of these expectations results in social disapproval, loss of commitment, punishment by devaluation and heightened risk of failure (Hannan, 2005; Carroll and Khessina, 2005).

Meanwhile, higher education institutions are facing numerous challenges, including the issues of remuneration, increasing work load, promotion of women, balance between part-time and tenured staff, job security and "reallocation of resources and staffing policies for the older and the younger generation of academics, i.e. recruitment, training, staff structures and career ladders, staff development and appraisal" (Enders and de Weert, 2004: 11). Clearly, employment practices in higher education are losing reliability, whereas – as ecological perspective suggests and employer branding literature supports – such violations may increase turnover, reduce job satisfaction, organizational trust and job performance (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). For example, one could imagine "how profound and immediate the effects would be within higher education if Harvard University were to announce suddenly that it is no longer offering tenure to its faculty members" (Baron, 2004: 11). Therefore, as Altbach et al. explicitly argue (2009: 1) "the academic profession must again become a profession-with appropriate training, compensation, and status... Salaries must be sufficient to attract talented young scholars and to keep them in the profession".

3) Strong labor market identities should be sharp/resonant, focused, and authentic (Baron, 2004). Organizational *sharpness and resonance* denote differentiation in cluster analytic terms and distinctiveness along social, ethnic, religious, economic, political or cultural lines. Thinking of the second dimension of employment-based identity, namely *focus*, it increases or decreases "in terms of the sorts of people who can fit" the organization (Baron, 2004: 16). Illustrating this, Hastings College of Law in San Francisco for some years has been hiring a large part of their teaching faculty from retired attorneys and judges, manifesting a highly focused labor market identity. *Authenticity* as an element of organizational identity "carries with it an almost sacred, cultural type of interpretation that conveys value" (Carroll and Wheaton, 2009: 256), "the symbolic playing out of the choices someone

inside the organization made with the respect to moral values" (Ibid, 269) and an "explicit articulation and public display of the "philosophy" behind the enterprise" (Ibid, 276). Authenticity in the labor market is relatively low in terms of "how the organization attracts, secures, managers and treats its people is viewed simply as a means to an end" (Baron, 2004: 17). Authenticity provides greater benefits when it is "organizationally constructed – that is, when the social construction is visibly or centrally supported by, and embodied in the structure and operations of a formal organization … Organizationally constructed images of authenticity gain more attention, gather stronger appeal, convey better credibility and persist longer than those which are not effectively organizationally embedded" (Carroll and Wheaton, 2009: 257).

Reverting back to employer branding in higher education and particularly to the development of employer value proposition, the key implication is that it should not be created, but uncovered. Every organization, including higher education institutions, has its employer brand, irrespective to whether it is actively engaged in building it, or not. The key issue is if the organization is conscious of "who it is" and proactive in communicating the unique benefits it offers (Mosley, 2009), or if it is of an identity 'X' blindly drifting in the 'red oceans' of a labor market. This could hardly help in attracting "right" and talented people, for as S. Winter (2003) draws a parallel to the lottery where "you can't win if you don't play" (In Murmann et al., p. 35). However, even if an organization has researched its organizational identity and revealed distinctive features of organizational attractiveness, it is still has a long way to go to creating a "message platform that is authentic, compelling, differentiated, and that will be internally embraced, appropriately received in the external market and consistently delivered upon by the organization" (Minchington and Estis, 2009, para. 16). The issue is that an employer brand often suffers from a lack of organizational construction – usually it is too narrowly focused merely on recruitment or resourcing (Rosethorn and Mensink, 2007), too general, too uniform, lost in catchphrases, perfect pictures and "not deeply rooted in how the organization feels" (Mosley, 2009: 9). Moreover, leading employer brands are not those that shine, but those that adequately and honestly reflect the internal reality of employment experience in a given organization (CIPD, 2008). Successful employer branding messages are focused on certainties and known for sustained and enduring reliability.

4) Organizations dependent on the same scarce inputs, such as skills, intelligence and efforts of human resources are facing recruitment-based competition in the labor market (Sørensen, 2004). In this light "existence of diverse and distinctive labor market identities is likely to facilitate screening and sorting, thereby improving the match between people and employment

situations" (Baron, 2004: 19). Variations across organizations in their human resource practices, organizational cultures and kinds of employees they are eager for refer to horizontal differentiation that increases opportunities for good job matches and affects positive employment outcome (Fujiwara-Greve and Greve, 2000; Greve and Fujiwara-Greve, 2003; Sørensen and Sorenson, 2007).

From the employer branding perspective, distinctive labor market identities are predictors of organizational attractiveness for: 1) a priori inform potential candidates about the employment experience and potential benefits they could expect in a specific organization (Berthon et al., 2005), i.e. perceived economic value, interest value, social value, development value and application value (Jiang and Iles, 2011); 2) signal about symbolic-instrumental attributes an organization possesses (Lievens and Highouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2007); 3) drive person-organization/person-job fit perceptions (Kroustalis and Meade, 2007; Schreurs et al., 2009; Chapman et al., 2005); and, 4) create positive attitudes towards the organization as a desirable place to work (Jiang and Iles, 2011). As H. Rosethorn and J. Mensink (2007) argue "understanding what engages people and being clear about what an organization offers and does not, means that you are more likely to recruit and therefore retain the right people." (p. 6).

5) Characterizing higher education institutions by their employment relations "provides a more genotypic characterization of forms in the sense that it speaks more directly to issues of identity"(Hannan et al., 2006: 758). Furthermore, as Hazelkorn (2011: 15) suggests, going "beyond macro-level terminology of teaching vs. research, basic vs. applied, comprehensive vs. specialist, school leaver vs. mature, etc." embraces deeper understanding of hidden features of organizational diversity. There is growing evidence that global rankings of higher education institutions increase mimicking behavior and lead to more homogeneity, rather than diversity (Van Vught, 2008) and even produce distortions that have "profound and often pervasive effects on higher education and society..." (Hazelkorn, 2011: 15). In an effort to overcome these limitations a number of attempts have recently been made to introduce more thorough, multi-dimensional classifications of institutional diversity (Van Vught et al., 2010; Hazelkorn, 2011; Reichert, 2009) paying certain attention to staff profiles and organizational characteristics.

Present study takes this effort one step further tackling the task of defining and delineating higher education institutions based on perceptions of employment experience they offer and labor market identities they possess. Consequently, such analysis provides with the evidence of "the internal truths of working life" (Housley, 2007: 16), meaningful insights on particular value offered by the organization to its employees and, therefore, a reasonable take-off for efficient employer branding strategies to attract,

retain and engage talented staff. Thus, establishing distinctiveness and creating a compelling employer value proposition primarily means answering for the employee the fundamental question "What's in it for me?" if I work there (Sartain and Schuman, 2006).

Most of the approaches clarifying and uncovering employer brand are aimed at discovering "what is common among employees, their shared needs, motivations, perceptions and values. However, most organizations are diverse" (Barrow and Mosley, 2011: 100) and the simple fact is that different people have different perceptions about the value and importance of different job characteristics (Schokkaert, 2009). For this reason, employee segmentation as "a tool used to identify the most significant and meaningful way of dividing people into groups who can be catered for differently according to their specific needs" (Barrow and Mosley, 2011: 100) is applied in this study. Although proving to be beneficial and helping companies "to be more efficient and effective in attracting, retaining and motivating both current and potential employees" (Moroco and Uncles, 2009: 181) application of market segmentation approaches to employer branding context is definitely yet unexplored and underappreciated, though idea itself is not entirely new (Hubschmid, 2012; Dahlström, 2011) and "is likely to grow in both frequency and sophistication over the coming years" (Barrow and Mosley, 2011: 100).

Method:

The study reported here was carried out in 19 Lithuanian higher education institutions – 7 universities (N = 715) and 12 colleges (N = 390) during the period of March – November, 2012. Table 1 below shows demographic characteristics of the total sample (N = 1105).

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Females	636	59,6
Males	431	40,4
Age		
<=25	25	2,30
26-35	317	28,9
36-45	308	28,1
46-55	239	21,8
>55	206	18,8
Employee group #1		
Academic staff	808	74,1
Administrative staff	282	25,9
Employee group #2		
Subordinate staff	837	77,3
Supervising staff	246	22,7

Table 1. *Demographic characteristics of the sample*

An Organizational Attractiveness Extraction Scale (OAES) specifically developed for this survey was used to measure perceived actual and desirable characteristics of employment experience in higher education institutions. OAES comprises 67 items, measuring 11 dimensions, i.e. *Organizational Culture*, *Fairness & Trust*, *Teamwork*, *Academic Environment*, *Strategic Management*, *Job Satisfaction*, *Supervisor Relationship*, *Compensation and Benefits*, *Training & Development*, *Work-Life Balance*, and *Working Conditions*. In order to test reliability of OAES with the present study data, a series of Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each of the 11 factors ranging from 0.675 to 0.953 with only one factor (*Work-life Balance*) returning coefficient lower than 0.70.

OAES is argued to enhance organizational intelligence by indicating the perceived tangible and intangible benefits that employees see in working for a specific organization (Berthon et al., 2005) and degree to which an organization is perceived as a good place to work (Jiang & Iles, 2011). Accordingly, OAES provides with means of extracting distinct, central and enduring characteristics of organizational identity to be transformed into unique, authentic, energizing, credible and differentiating employer value proposition that will be marketed to potential applicants as well as promised and kept to existing employees.

To collect the data, invitations to participate in the present study were sent by email to employees of higher education institutions, whose management has expressed the survey approval. The email contained a link to a web-based anonymous questionnaire. Although e-mail surveys are prone to poor response rates and it is possible that results will be biased, it is still the most effective method to reach respondents in scattered faculties, departments and divisions of higher education institutions. The list of items was randomly mixed not to provide respondents with a clue as to what dimension is being measured and to avoid inertia and bias. Twofold *Experience* and *Importance* 10–point response scale was used for evaluation of each item. Firstly, respondents were asked to assess whether a statement reflects actual employment experience in particular higher education institution, with "1" used to indicate "least experienced" (lowest perceived experience), and "10" – "most experienced" (highest perceived experience). Secondly, the respondents were asked to evaluate how important such employment experience is to them, with "1" used to indicate "least important" (lowest perceived value) and "10" – "most important" (highest perceived value).

Since organizational attractiveness and employer branding is eventually connected to employee engagement, the original eight-item *Affective Commitment Scale* developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was included to measure "employees' perception of their relationship with the

organization and their reason for staying" (Meyer and Allen, 2004). Evaluation of items, such as “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization”, or “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me” ranged from “1 = strongly disagree” to “10 = strongly agree”. Negatively keyed items were reversed avoiding potential confusion.

Additionally, demographics of age, gender, tenure in organization, job position (supervising and subordinate) and group (academic and administrative staff) were examined.

Data analysis:

The data of the survey was analyzed applying IBM SPSS Statistics 19 for Windows software package. Analysis of data included means and standard deviations for each of the items and dimensions on both scales of *Experienc*e and *Importance.* Additionally, total mean of responses on Experience scale (*M*=6.88) and total mean of responses on Importance scale (*M*=8.95) were calculated to see means falling above and below the treshhold and to facilitate results interpretation. It is evident from the Table 2 that *Job Satisfaction* (*M*=7.92; *SD*=1.503), *Supervisor Relationship* (*M*=7.74; *SD*=2.325), *Teamwork* (*M*=7.20; *SD*=1.715), *Academic Environment* (*M*=6.97; *SD*=1.683), and *Work-Life Balance* (*M*=6.87; *SD*=2.079) are most intense facets of employment experience in higher education, while *Compensations & Benefits* (*M*=5.63; *SD*=2.321) as well as *Fairness & Trust* (*M*=6.45; *SD*=2.291) are perceived as least manifested.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Organizational Culture	960	1	10	6.72	2.020
Fairness & Trust	998	1	10	6.45	2.291
Teamwork	1013	1	10	7.20	1.715
Academic Environment	1037	1	10	6.97	1.683
Strategic Management	996	1	10	6.59	2.045
Job Satisfaction	997	1	10	7.92	1.503
Supervisor Relationship	1035	1	10	7.74	2.325
Compensation and Benefits	1011	1	10	5.63	2.321
Training and Development	1038	1	10	6.54	2.122
Work-Life Balance	1059	1	10	6.87	2.079
Working Conditions	1032	1	10	6.68	2.120

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics for OAES dimensions on Experience scale*

As Table 3 presents, employees in higher education place most emphasis on *Supervisor Relationship* (*M*=9.22; *SD*=1.079), *Job Satisfaction* (*M*=9.18; *SD*=.993), *Fairness & Trust*, (*M*=9.18; *SD*=1.012), *Academic Environment* (*M*=9.13; *SD*=1.107), and *Working Conditions* (*M*=9.10; *SD*=1.080).

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Organizational Culture	874	3	10	8.92	1.061
Fairness & Trust	892	2	10	9.18	1.012
Teamwork	912	2	10	8.91	1.129
Academic Environment	949	1	10	9.13	1.107
Strategic Management	901	2	10	8.73	1.315
Job Satisfaction	893	3	10	9.18	.993
Supervisor Relationship	928	2	10	9.22	1.079
Compensation and Benefits	923	2	10	8.99	1.116
Training and Development	947	2	10	8.87	1.199
Work-Life Balance	962	1	10	8.75	1.302
Working Conditions	946	2	10	9.10	1.080

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics for OAES dimensions on Importance scale*

To investigate the gaps between actual and desired employment experience in surveyed higher education institutions *Demand* scores were calculated as a difference between dimensions' means on Experience and Importance scales, fluctuating from -9 to 9 with a total mean of *M*=-2.08. Data analysis has revealed the gaps unexceptionally in each and every item and dimension of OAES, yet only least and peak discrepancies are suggested for further consideration. The most demanding organizational aspects, indicating that actual employment experience did not meet individual values and need, as perceived by higher education employees are *Compensation & Benefits* (*M*= -3.31), *Fairness & Trust* (*M*=-2.68), *Training & Development* (*M*=-2.26), *Working Conditions* (*M*=-2.25), and *Organizational Culture* (*M*=-2.14).

Furthermore, items with highest mean values on *Experience* and *Importance* scale, as well as items with highest *Demand* scores within each dimension were identified and listed in Table 4 to exhibit key sources of organizational attractiveness, primary drivers of commitment and deepest gaps between *status quo* and *state of the art* in higher education.

Dimensions	Highest scoring items on Experience scale	M	SD	Highest scoring items on Importance scale	M	SD	Most demanding items	M	SD
Organizational Culture	Academic freedom is valued.	7.24	2.332	Good atmosphere prevails in my institution.	9.21	1.293	Constructive criticism is appreciated.	-2.74	2.542
Fairness & Trust	Clear standards for promotion and tenure are articulated.	7.09	2.631	Employees are treated fairly.	9.34	1.075	Remuneration system is clear and objective.	-3.08	3.143
Teamwork	I have good relationships with my colleagues.	8.70	1.515	I have good relationships with my colleagues.	9.28	1.144	Effective internal communication is developed	-3.08	3.143
Academic Environment	My peers are best scientists and lecturers.	8.05	1.853	High study quality is pursued.	9.27	1.447	Students are good and motivated in my institution.	-2.88	2.239
Strategic Management	My institution is building positive reputation and image.	7.37	2.253	My institution is building positive reputation and image.	9.05	1.633	Organizational, departmental and employee integrity is ensured.	-2.35	3.032
Job Satisfaction	My job is intellectually challenging.	9.22	1.299	I like my job and find it interesting.	9.48	1.130	I feel that I and my efforts are valued.	-2.16	2.755
Supervisor Relationship	My supervisor listens to me and regards my opinion.	8.06	2.484	My supervisor listens to me and regards my opinion.	9.32	1.166	My supervisor gives me feedback about my progress.	-1.80	2.652
Compensation & Benefits	Best employees are appreciated.	6.87	2.570	Employees' performance results and competencies are recognized and rewarded.	9.27	1.276	Effective employee incentive scheme is functioning in my institution (for loyalty, achievement, etc.).	-4.06	3.289
Training & Development	I have opportunities for personal growth.	7.19	2.473	I have opportunities for personal growth.	9.00	1.593	Employee training and development meets my institution's aims and objectives.	-2.67	2.896
Work-Life	I may harmonize my	7.58	2.475	I may harmonize my	9.17	1.394	My work load is	-2.24	3.458

Balance	work and personal life needs.			work and personal life needs.			manageable.		
Working Conditions	Safe and comfortable working environment is created in my institution.	7.39	2.378	The consistent administrative support is provided to faculty members.	9.19	1.257	I am not experiencing stress in my work.	-3.02	3.236

Table 4. *Survey items with highest means on Experience, Importance and Demand scales.*

The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to explore whether differences existed between mean values of perceived actual and desirable employment experience in universities and colleges subsamples. As Table 5 and Table 6 show, the results indicated statistically significant differences on a majority of dimensions, except *Work-Life Balance* on *Experience Scale* and on all dimensions on *Importance scale*. It should be noted that colleges' employees are prone to higher overall estimations of all measured employment facets.

	Organizational Culture	**Fairness & Trust**	**Teamwork**	**Academic Environment**	**Strategic Management**	**Job Satisfaction**	**Supervisor Relationship**	**Compensation and Benefits**	**Training & Development**	**Work-Life Balance**	**Working Conditions**
Mann-Whitney U	85500,500	88995,500	95974,500	94121,500	79582,000	95866,500	111272,500	92247,000	101992,500	121762,000	96345,500
Wilcoxon W	286795,500	304491,500	323449,500	332516,500	293113,000	315319,500	344175,500	319722,000	341078,500	367813,000	329931,500
Z	-4,386	-5,364	-4,159	-5,628	-7,515	-3,499	-2,001	-4,873	-3,930	-,791	-5,045
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,045	,000	,000	,429	,000

p value of <.05 is statistically significant
p value of<.001 is highly significant

Table 5. *Results of non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test on Experience Scale.*

	Organizational Culture	Fairness & Trust	Teamwork	Academic Environment	Strategic Management	Job Satisfaction	Supervisor Relationship	Compensation and Benefits	Training & Development	Work-Life Balance	Working Conditions
Mann-Whitney U	72745,000	75237,000	76776,000	92250,500	67107,000	77767,500	84443,000	83820,000	85363,500	93219,000	86196,500
Wilcoxon W	231511,000	240262,000	245847,000	277386,500	231558,000	241645,500	261753,000	260535,000	269284,500	283255,000	268302,500
Z	-4,151	-4,412	-5,085	-2,855	-7,181	-3,831	-3,846	-3,612	-4,485	-3,258	-4,331
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,004	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,001	,000

p value of <.05 is statistically significant
p value of<.001 is highly significant

Table 6. Results of non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test on Importance Scale.

Considering these statistically significant differences, further analysis additionally explores how data differentiates between types of higher education institutions, namely universities and colleges, and whether different patterns of organizational attractiveness correlating with different missions could be delineated.

Facilitating the process of identifying, articulating and describing similarities and differences between and among higher education institution, classification of respondents into homogenous groups (segments) based on their perceptions of actual employment experience was undertaken. As Van Vught et al. (2010: 13) point out, "classifying is an activity inextricably related to the human desire to create order out of chaos. The general purpose of a classification is to increase transparency in complex systems, to grasp the diversity within such systems and – consequently – to improve our understanding of phenomena and systems and to support effective communication" (Van Vught et al., 2010: 13).

Cluster analysis as a convenient technique for segmentation was applied. 11 OAES dimensions – *Organizational Culture*, *Fairness & Trust*, *Teamwork*, *Academic Environment*, *Strategic Management*, *Job Satisfaction*, *Supervisor Relationship*, *Compensation and Benefits*, *Training & Development*, *Work-Life Balance*, and *Working Conditions*, as well as *Loyalty* derived from Affective Commitment Scale were included as clustering variables in the analysis. As far as the aim of this study was to explore attitudes towards actual employment experience in higher education, only the data from *Experience scale* was used in further analyses.

Because of the large sample size and many clustering variables, Quick Cluster (SPSS) *K-means* nonhierarchical method was used (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011). Considering previous research (e.g. TNS, 2003) four clusters were pre-specified to retain from the data. The final cluster centers and mean profiles for constructed segments are displayed in Table 7 and Table 8. Accordingly, 11% of respondents have been classified in cluster 1, 28% have been assigned to cluster 2, while 22% in cluster 3 and 39% in cluster 4.

	Cluster			
	1	2	3	4
Organizational Culture	3	9	5	7
Fairness & Trust	3	9	5	7
Teamwork	4	9	6	7
Academic Environment	4	9	6	7
Strategic Management	3	9	5	7
Job Satisfaction	6	9	7	8
Supervisor Relationship	4	10	7	8
Compensation & Benefits	2	8	4	6
Training and Development	3	9	5	7
Work-Life Balance	4	9	6	7
Working Conditions	3	9	5	7

Loyalty	4	9	6	8

Table 7. *Final Cluster Centers*

	Cluster			
	1	2	3	4
Organizational Culture	3.21	8.89	5.29	7.07
Fairness & Trust	2.64	9.03	4.74	6.73
Teamwork	4.46	8.91	6.21	7.37
Academic Environment	4.35	8.65	5.90	7.17
Strategic Management	3.22	8.81	5.15	6.82
Job Satisfaction	5.66	9.30	6.94	8.20
Supervisor Relationship	3.86	9.53	6.51	8.33
Compensation & Benefits	2.16	8.26	3.98	5.82
Training and Development	3.10	8.71	5.18	6.90
Work-Life Balance	3.98	8.52	5.64	7.31
Working Conditions	3.24	8.76	5.30	7.02
Loyalty	4.09	8.87	6.21	7.50

Table 8. *Table of Mean Profiles*

As Table 9 shows, a one-way ANOVA indicated the overall significant difference in group means ($p < .001$). F values suggested that *Organizational Culture* (1011.7), *Fairness & Trust* (922.9) and *Strategic Management* (817.1) are most important variables in clustering. Since the assumption of equal variances on the dependent variable across groups defined by the independent variable was not satisfied ($p<.001$), consequently, a Games-Howell *post-hoc* test was carried out to confirm where differences occurred between groups and has shown that all variables significantly differentiate four clusters through their cluster means at the .05 level.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Organizational Culture	Between Groups	2333.735	3	777.912	1011.743	.000
	Within Groups	558.978	727	.769		
	Total	2892.712	730			
Fairness & Trust	Between Groups	3045.741	3	1015.247	922.985	.000
	Within Groups	799.671	727	1.100		
	Total	3845.412	730			
Teamwork	Between Groups	1378.194	3	459.398	477.218	.000
	Within Groups	699.853	727	.963		
	Total	2078.048	730			
Academic	Between	1334.225	3	444.742	436.879	.000

Environment	Groups					
	Within Groups	740.084	727	1.018		
	Total	2074.309	730			
Strategic Management	Between Groups	2289.920	3	763.307	817.146	.000
	Within Groups	679.101	727	.934		
	Total	2969.021	730			
Job Satisfaction	Between Groups	984.397	3	328.132	431.689	.000
	Within Groups	552.602	727	.760		
	Total	1536.999	730			
Supervisor Relationship	Between Groups	2228.120	3	742.707	342.434	.000
	Within Groups	1576.794	727	2.169		
	Total	3804.914	730			
Compensation & Benefits	Between Groups	2842.167	3	947.389	648.012	.000
	Within Groups	1062.869	727	1.462		
	Total	3905.036	730			
Training and Development	Between Groups	2258.268	3	752.756	558.706	.000
	Within Groups	979.502	727	1.347		
	Total	3237.771	730			
Work-Life Balance	Between Groups	1542.439	3	514.146	241.078	.000
	Within Groups	1550.470	727	2.133		
	Total	3092.909	730			
Working Conditions	Between Groups	2192.877	3	730.959	500.913	.000
	Within Groups	1060.878	727	1.459		
	Total	3253.754	730			
Loyalty	Between Groups	1546.282	3	515.427	191.554	.000
	Within Groups	1956.192	727	2.691		
	Total	3502.475	730			

Table 9. *ANOVA table*

Evaluating cluster solution's stability the file was split by higher education institution type as presented in Table 10 and two solutions' cluster

centroids compared (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011). As far as no significant differences were observed, a high degree of overall solution stability was presumed. Additionally, the difference of frequency distribution in each cluster was considered. Accordingly, universities' employees distributed as follows: 11% in cluster 1, 22% in cluster 2, 24% in cluster 3 and 43% in cluster 4. Meanwhile, in colleges 8% were found in cluster 1, 39% in cluster 2, 20% in cluster 3 and 33% in cluster 4. Therefore, cluster 2 dominates colleges and cluster 4 universities.

University or college		Cluster			
		1	2	3	4
University	Organizational Culture	3	9	5	7
	Fairness & Trust	3	9	5	7
	Teamwork	4	9	6	7
	Academic Environment	4	9	6	7
	Strategic Management	3	9	5	7
	Job Satisfaction	6	9	7	8
	Supervisor Relationship	4	9	7	8
	Compensation and Benefits	2	8	4	6
	Training and Development	3	9	5	7
	Work-Life Balance	4	9	6	8
	Working Conditions	3	9	5	7
	Loyalty	4	9	7	8
College	Organizational Culture	3	9	5	7
	Fairness & Trust	2	9	4	7
	Teamwork	4	9	6	7
	Academic Environment	4	9	6	7
	Strategic Management	3	9	5	7
	Job Satisfaction	5	9	7	8
	Supervisor Relationship	3	10	6	8
	Compensation and Benefits	2	8	4	6
	Training and Development	3	9	5	7
	Work-Life Balance	4	8	5	7
	Working Conditions	3	9	5	7
	Loyalty	5	9	5	7

Table 10. *The Final Cluster Centers for universities and colleges subsamples.*

Relating clusters to demographic variables cross tabulation procedure was run and a Chi-square test was performed to determine statistically significant differences. The four clusters significantly differentiated between *age*, χ^2 (9, N = 703) = 17.70, p =.039, with employees aged from 36 to 45 concentrated in cluster 1 (15.3%), employees above 55 more related to cluster 2 (34.6%), cluster 3 again represented by employees from 36 to 45 years old (25.1%), and cluster 4 most often found among members aged from 26 to 35 (44.2%). *Employee group* also produced significant

associations, χ^2 (6, N = 725) = 12.80, p =.046, with *academic staff* more related to 1 (12.7%) and 3 (22.3%), and *administrative staff* more concentrated in 2 (33.1%) and 4 (40.3%). Similarly, *employee position* significantly differentiated through the clusters, χ^2 (3, N = 720) = 13.12, p =.004. *Subordinates* were most often found in cluster 1 (13.2%) and 4 (39.4%), while *supervisors* produced significant associations with cluster 2 (34.9%) and 3 (23.4%). Finally, the type of higher education institutions also produced significant relationships, χ^2 (3, N = 731) = 29.55, p<.001). Cluster 2 was most often found in *colleges* (39.8%), whereas 1 (11.7%), 3 (23.6%) and 4 (43.4%) in universities.

However no relationship was found between clusters and *gender*, χ^2 (3, N = 709) = 2.57, p =.462. Looking for associations between clusters and *job tenure*, the Chi-square test was not used for statistical significance, as far as more than 20% of cells had expected count less than 5.

An analysis of variance also showed a significant effect of loyalty, F (3,727) = 191.55, p < .001. A Games-Howell *post-hoc* test revealed that loyalty level was statistically significantly lower for cluster 1 (M = 4.09, SD = 1.873, p < .05) with statistically significant difference of 4.785 between cluster 2 (M = 8.87, SD = 1.076, p < .05), statistically significant difference of 2.128 between cluster 3 (M = 6.21, SD = 2.006, p < .05), and statistically significant difference of 3.415 with cluster 4 (M = 7.50, SD = 1.674, p < .05).

Interpreting and profiling clusters, cluster centroids and mean profiles were examined (Malhotra, 2009), the highest scoring items within each dimension considered and significant cluster memberships used (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011) to complete the description of segments.

Accordingly, cluster 1, commonly represented by universities' academic and subordinate employees from 36 to 45 years old is characterized by low organizational loyalty and low throughout work commitment. Most likely, this segment – fortunately small enough – includes those "actively disengaged", who, according to Gallup (2010) "view their workplaces negatively and are liable to spread that negativity to others", or "ambivalent" that tend to be low talent and low skill (TNS, 2003). Physically present but psychologically absent, this group could be named „*Work Pessimists*". It may be presumed, however, that having low perceptions of organizational attractiveness Work Pessimists also signal about the *unhealthy* employer brand of their higher education institution.

Further, cluster 2, by contrast, is characterized by high organizational loyalty, overall manifestation of organizational attractiveness facets and is most often found in colleges among supervising and administrative staff aged above 55. Primary driven by *Supervisor Relationship, Job Satisfaction, Fairness & Trust* and as well as embracing *Teamwork* and *Organizational Culture* employees in this segment appreciate academic freedom, good

relationships with colleagues, rely upon clear employment standards, are driven by intellectually challenging work and possibility to be heard and counted. Although working a lot, members in this group are engaged and connected to their higher education institution, enjoy its good reputation (*Strategic Management*), perceive it as an attractive employer, thus could be labeled "*Work Enthusiasts*".

Employees comprising cluster 3 are facing lower salaries, lack of incentives (*Compensation and Benefits*), and objectivity of remuneration system (*Fairness & Trust*), organizational integrity (*Strategic Management*) and purposeful training (*Training & Development*). Presumably, cluster 3 could suffer from the number of inherent challenges academic workplace is struggling with. This segment is more concentrated in universities and mainly represented by supervising and academic employees aged from 36 to 45. Members in this group are more dedicated to their work (*Job Satisfaction*) than to their organization, embrace *Academic Environment* providing possibility to work alongside best scientists and lecturers and enjoy good relationships (*Teamwork* and *Supervisor Relationship*). However, as suggested by average loyalty score and the low to above average mean profile, employees in this segment are not engaged, therefore could easier leave organization for better future, career or working conditions. It could be concluded that employees comprising cluster 3 are more career-oriented, forwarding their own interests, striving for more self-realization through enhancement of their excellence and expertise, and accordingly might be named "*Work Pragmatists*".

Eventually, the largest cluster 4 is prevailing in universities among subordinate and administrative employees aged from 26 to 35. Characterized by sufficient loyalty, engagement and generally positive viewpoint, this segment prefers *Supervisor Relationship* over their work (*Job Satisfaction*), shows strong team orientation (*Teamwork*), and highly appreciates *Work-Life Balance,* allowing properly prioritize between work and personal life needs. This segment most likely reflects the recent trends of changing society that caused "many workers to face conflicts between their work and their personal lives" and to "desire… for more flexibility in the workplace" (Council of Economic Advisors, 2010: 1) and embraces the real attractiveness of academic life "enjoying the bigger flexibility of working conditions and accountability" and "academic freedom" (Enders and de Weert, 2004: 225). Thus, this group striving to achieve ideal work-life balance could be referred "*Work-life Balancers*".

As it can be seen from the data in Table 10, exploring the distribution of identified segments across 19 surveyed higher education institutions, the following patterns could be observed:

- *Work Enthusiasts* prevail in six higher education institutions (College #4, College #5, College #7, College #8, College #9 and College #10) mainly complemented by *Work-life Balancers* or *Work Pragmatists* in College #4 and College #5.
- *Work-life Balancers* dominate twelve higher education institutions in different combinations with the second largest segment, namely 1) with *Work Pragmatists* in University #1, University #3, College #3, and College #11; 2) with *Work Pessimists* in University #5 and University #6; 3) with *Work Enthusiasts* in College #2 and University #8; and finally; and 4) with the equal mix of *Work Enthusiasts* and *Work Pragmatists* in College #1, University #2; University #7 or *Work Pessimists* and *Work Enthusiasts* in College #12.

College #6 makes an exception being dominated by *Work Pragmatists* and *Work Pessimists*.

Higher education institutions	Cluster Number of Case				Total
	1	2	3	4	
University #1	13.6%	19.3%	30.7%	36.4%	100.0%
University #2	.0%	21.4%	21.4%	57.1%	100.0%
College #1	15.4%	23.1%	30.8%	30.8%	100.0%
University #3	5.6%	22.5%	24.7%	47.2%	100.0%
University #4	.0%	27.3%	9.1%	63.6%	100.0%
University #5	24.1%	19.0%	17.2%	39.7%	100.0%
College #2	18.2%	9.1%	27.3%	45.5%	100.0%
College #3	7.7%	61.5%	15.4%	15.4%	100.0%
College #4	2.3%	55.8%	20.9%	20.9%	100.0%
University #6	27.8%	16.7%	22.2%	33.3%	100.0%
College #5	26.5%	8.8%	41.2%	23.5%	100.0%
College #6	.0%	59.1%	9.1%	31.8%	100.0%
University # 7	6.7%	24.4%	24.4%	44.4%	100.0%
College #7	.0%	56.0%	16.0%	28.0%	100.0%
College #8	2.9%	58.8%	11.8%	26.5%	100.0%
College #9	25.7%	37.1%	8.6%	28.6%	100.0%
College #10	.0%	.0%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
University #8	15.9%	21.7%	17.4%	44.9%	100.0%
College #11	15.4%	15.4%	7.7%	61.5%	100.0%

Table 11. *Crosstab of Higher Education Institution and Cluster Group*

According to these findings, with respect to the perceived offered employment experience, higher education institutions may be grouped into:

- *Inclusive Workplaces* (32%), defined as those mainly represented by Work Enthusiasts and dominated by six colleges.
- *Meaningful Workplaces* (26%), defined as those mainly represented by Work-Life Balancers with the second largest segment of Work Enthusiasts and assigned to three universities and two colleges.

- *Balanced Workplaces* (21%), defined as those mainly represented by Work-Life Balancers with the second largest segment of Work Pragmatists and comprising two universities and two colleges).
- *Unhappy Workplaces* (21%), defined as those containing a rather larger numbers of Work Pessimists and including two universities and two colleges.

Conclusion

It is rare to find an institution which is at once so uniform and so diverse; it is recognisable in all the guises which it takes, but in no one place is it identical with what it is in any other. This unity and diversity constitute the final proof of the extent to which the university was the spontaneous product of medieval life; for it is only living things which can in this way, while fully retaining their identity, bend and adapt themselves to a whole variety of circumstances and environments". (Durkheim, 1977: 163).

Higher education is a notable exception of an organizational population of ancient lineage that has retained dominance and survived through technological, social and economic change (Hannan, 2005). Characterized by a "Hesburgh paradox", the higher education system is "sluggish, even heavily resistant to change, but somehow also produces virtually revolutionary change" (Clark, 1986: 182), for, presumably, it has already been born with "successful adaptive mechanism" (Ibid, 184).

However, "transformations unprecedented in scope and diversity" that have taken place in higher education in the past half century (Altbach et al., 2009: iii) have heavily affected academic profession by lowering salaries, increasing work load and occupational stress, and deepening culture of mistrust (Enders and De Weert, 2004; Court and Kinman, 2008; Edwards et al., 2009; Altbach, 2000). As Coaldrake and Stedman (1999: 9) point out, „academics remain intrinsically motivated by their work, but many feel they are under growing pressure and disconnection from their universities. Many academic staff feel burdened by the increasing weight of expectations placed upon them, in contrast to their ideal of determining the parameters of their own working lives".

Therefore, for their survival, higher education institutions have to struggle once again for improvement of working life in academia, looking for new models and approaches, and first and foremost, developing distinctiveness strategies. The time is right for employer branding in higher education.

In this light, the empirical framework to measure organizational attractiveness is explored in this study to identify higher education institutions' strengths and weaknesses relative to other institutions, and to "establish what exactly sets (them) apart from others, and what makes (them)

memorable and attractive to (their) audiences" (Distinct Higher Education, 2012: 15), which is crucial on the path towards distinctiveness.

Specifically, an 11 dimensional 67 item Organizational Attractiveness Extraction Scale (OAES) was applied in 19 Lithuanian higher education institutions measuring employees' perceptions of actual and desirable employment experience. This research instrument has proven useful in determining employment experiences that are most often met by employees in higher education institutions, unfolding employee work values preferences and discovering the gaps of actual and ideal employment experience. Accordingly, it enables to explore organizational attractiveness of higher education institutions, to uncover unique characteristics of their employment-based identity and, therefore, provides the means for building effective employer branding strategy.

Consequently, the current research in 19 Lithuanian higher education institutions indicates that work in academia appears to be predominantly driven by *Job Satisfaction,* i.e. interesting, intellectually challenging and meaningful work, and possibility to realize one's ideas and potential and being valued. These findings support the idea that higher education institutions have preserved a continuous identity that is bound by "love", settled by academic men of ideas and ruled by personal autonomy, collegial self-governing and altruistic commitment (Clark, 1986). Moreover, "academia seems to operate according to its own principles of labor regulation" and "demarcates a separate social field, in which not only skill requirements but also professional conventions and expectations differ from other occupations" (Bauder, 2006: 232). The findings of the current study, revealing that *Fairness & Trust* and *Supervisor Relationship* are highly appreciated by higher education employees, are consistent with the previous research showing, that trust is among the key universal values and defining principles of great workplace (www.greatplacetowork.com) as well as interpersonal relationships (especially in the area of supervisor-subordinate relationship) are fostering psychological growth, development and long-term satisfaction (Montana and Charnov, 2000; Sachau, 2007). Interestingly, *Strategic Management* was not given much importance, which could be explained by particularity of academic workplace, which is "built on a culture of individualism and academic personal autonomy" (Coaldrake and Stedman, 1999: 1). This study also corroborates the previous research findings that higher education institutions face issues of remuneration, limited career opportunities (Enders and De Weert, 2004), and pressures on time, workload and morale (Coaldrake and Stedman, 1999).

Furthermore, this paper illustrates the relevance of the identity-based organizational ecology approach to employer branding theory and specifically to the conceptualization and operationalization of labor market

identities. Particularly, this study elaborates on the ideas of Baron (2004), who has argued that "culture and labor market identity are at the very core of contemporary organizations – critical for strategy, survival, innovativeness, and performance (p. 28), urged for "greater attention to how organizations relate to the labor market as a primary basis for distinguishing organizational identities and forms" (Ibid.: 29), and suggested dimensionalizing and clustering "labor market identities within a set of competing enterprises" (Ibid.: 27) as a fruitful research strategy toward that end.

Consequently, this paper has attempted to cluster higher education employees according to their perceptions of employment experience and to group higher education institutions based on their most salient labor market identities. The four main segments this analysis produced were *Work Pessimists* (11%), *Work Enthusiast* (28%), *Work Pragmatists* (22%) and *Work-Life Balancers* (39%). Accordingly, with respect to prevalence of particular segments, higher education institutions were grouped into *Inclusive Workplaces* (32%), *Meaningful Workplaces* (26%), *Balanced Workplaces* (21%) and *Unhappy Workplaces* (21%).

This analysis is quite revealing in several ways and offers a number of insights and implications. First, the findings of this study suggest that higher education institutions embody some default model of employment relations, complemented, enriched and differentiated by a number of unique features. Second, this study shows that perceptions of employment experience in different groups of employees are rather heterogeneous (e.g. supervising employees mainly stands for *Work Enthusiast* and *Work Pragmatists*, while subordinate staff generally represents *Work Pessimists* and *Work-Life Balancers*). That supports previous findings indicating, that organization insiders, depending on their age, gender, work experience, education (Crossman and Abou-Zaki, 2003) as well as job position, career stage, cultures and work environment (Seta et al., 2000) "can hold different, perhaps conflicting, defaults for an organization" (Hsu and Hannan, 2005: 476). Third, results of cluster analysis demonstrate, that data does significantly differentiate between types of higher education institutions, i.e. surveyed universities and colleges. Namely, colleges' employees have higher overall perceptions of employment experience, thus quite naturally, chiefly represent *Work Enthusiasts* (39%), while universities' employees are more concentrated among *Work-Life Balancers*. Accordingly, *Inclusive Workplaces* are exclusively represented by colleges, whereas distribution of colleges and universities in other groups is almost equal.

Eventually, classification of higher education institutions deriving from attitudinal employee segments is helpful in delineating the landscape of higher education labor market, provides "the different stakeholders a better understanding of the specific ambitions and performances of the various

types of higher education institutions" (Van Vught, 2008: 172), and could be a starting point for establishing distinctiveness and developing employer branding strategies.

Promoting and encouraging these efforts, examples of best practices of successful employer branding efforts are already available from those recognized as the great academic workplaces (Academic Workplace 2012). For example, Southern New Hampshire University's website proclaims that:

> "We offer competitive compensation and affordable benefits programs, create opportunity for training and professional development, and administer sound payroll and employment practices that treat all employees with dignity and equality". (http://www.snhu.edu/602.asp)

Another case of well-established and communicated distinctive identity is Baylor University, affirming that:

> "At Baylor University, we strive to educate men and women for worldwide leadership and service by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community. We look for those individuals that not only want to be a part of the Baylor mission but want to help shape that experience for future generations. As a Christian institution of research and scholarship, we believe an atmosphere of diversity and inclusion is essential to academic excellence and seek to build a community whose members have diverse cultures, backgrounds, and life experiences". http://www.baylor.edu/hr/index.php?id=69170

George Mason University stands for one more illustration of memorable identity and effective employer branding, announcing proudly, that:

> "People choose to work at George Mason University for many reasons, and there are even more reasons why they stay for a career. There's the excitement of being part of a vibrant academic and professional community, surrounded by people whose ideas are shaping tomorrow's news! Add that to a robust benefits package, a commitment to flexibility as well as work/life options, the opportunity for personal and professional development and you have a career in balance at Mason!" http://hr.gmu.edu/employment/

Similarly, Miami Dade College emphasizes its distinctiveness of "providing quality and innovative educational opportunities", in such terms:

> "…our employment needs are very diverse. From full-time professional faculty to part-time adjunct faculty and support

> staff, the people who comprise the MDC workforce are the innovators who help the College maintain our reputation as one of the most highly regarded colleges in the country. If you're committed and have a passion for education and a desire to help others learn and grow in their personal and professional lives, consider an opportunity with MDC. Come here to learn, come here to grow, come here to make an impact!" http://jobs.mdc.edu/

Reflecting on the examples above and drawing on findings from the current research, it could be speculated that Southern New Hampshire University is a *Meaningful Workplace*; Baylor University and Miami Dade College represent *Inclusive Workplaces,* while George Mason University could be labeled "*Balanced Workplace*". It could be also concluded that each of the cases described possess organizational identities that are, according to Baron (2004), sharp, focused and authentic (notably the case of Baylor University and to a lesser extent Southern New Hampshire University's), therefore strong.

Altogether, repeating the question raised by E. Hazelkorn (2011: 3) "does everyone really want to be like Harvard – or they do they just want to be loved?" (p. 3), the answer is evident. Respectively in the business, if everybody were to get stuck on admiring the Fortune 500 list, they would be as narrow-minded as to see only .000000001% of those that got there (Murmann et al., 2003). After all, world is full of other success stories that do not conform to any universal laws of organizational attractiveness and employer branding is there to embrace and celebrate this uniqueness. Thus, despite the fact, that higher education institutions are roughly doing the same thing and serving the same mission, i.e. teaching and research, their inherent "unity and diversity" per se speaks of much unexplored potential of distinctiveness towards "owning a word in the prospect's mind. A word that nobody else owns" (Temple, 2006: 18).

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