The theses of the PhD dissertation

ONBOARDING IN BIG COMPANIES

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1. THE PRECEDENTS AND THE GOALS OF THE RESEARCH, THE PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Hungary's economy was significantly transformed and modernized after the change of the political regime, partly because of the direct foreign capital investments. As a result, the majority of the companies operating in Hungary (mostly international companies, organizations of foreign ownership and major Hungarian enterprises) are more and more connected to the international (global) economy. This has created a new kind of challenge for the human resources management practice of the organizations (GYÖKÉR – FINNA, 2012). However, there are only few works which attempt to explore how this challenge is met or to examine the human resources processes of the foreign companies or to adapt the international trends in Hungary.

It is really difficult to find research related to onboarding performed in big companies either in Hungary or abroad. The authors rather approach the issue from the individual's viewpoint, that is, they examine the acculturation and socialization processes only (MORRISON, 1995; ASHFORT et al, 2007; TOARNICZKY, 2011) and they hardly analyze the organizational aspect.

There is already a significant number of works dealing with the specific areas of onboarding, such as the mentor's activity (EMMERIK et al., 2005; MAISTRE et al., 2006; NEIHOFF, 2006; MOORE et al., 2008; HAMLIN – SAGE, 2011; HOFFMEISTER et al., 2011; OKURAME, 2011, 2012; LAIHO – BRANDT, 2012), the leader's contribution (JOKISAARI – NURMI, 2009; BRADT, 2010; KULKARNI – LENGNICK-HALL, 2011, LEE et al., 2013) and the coworkers' participation (FILSTAD, 2004; ANTONACOPOULOU – GÜTTEL, 2010; GHERARDI – PERROTTA, 2010; KORTE, 2010; BOGAERT et al. 2012). However, there has not been a comprehensive and complex study of the organizational aspect so far. As for the orientation related to onboarding, one could only read methodological booklets and articles earlier (BIELSKI, 2007; DEKASTLE, 2010; HATVA, 2012; NDUNGURU, 2012; BANKSON, 2013; FERRI-REED, 2013; WATKINS, 2013) but could not rely on scientifically explored correlations.

As a graduating university student, I also have personal experience of onboarding. My onboarding took place at a Colorado-based company where I had my internship at the HR

department. During the internship, I had the opportunity to perform an open primary data collection partly in connection with this topic. I also performed my examinations at a Hungarian company. I compiled a TDK (Students' Scientific Association) paper from the results of my comparisons. Owing to my personal experience gained in the US and the research performed in onboarding, I came to like this field of research and onboarding became the topic of my doctoral dissertation.

My commitment and my researcher's point of view were greatly influenced by the first semester of the 2012/2013 academic year. I spent this period at the University of New Mexico with the Gyula Rezler scholarship. During this eventful semester, I attended, among others, an HR management MBA course. During this course, I had to compile a research plan and I chose onboarding as the topic. It was Professor Emeritus Zane Reeves who helped me with the compilation of the plan and the finalization of the examination methods. The professor told me that any research was worth something if its results could be used in real life.

The goal of my doctoral dissertation is the exploration of the onboarding practices and the related measures applied by the Hungarian units of big international companies by using complex and quantitative methods. Based on my research results, I also would like to make suggestions which could help the managers of companies to make onboarding more efficient. My related sub-goals are defined as follows:

1. to define onboarding based on the relevant literature, to define its elements; based on the definition, to identify and collect the literature which would make the quantitative examination of onboarding possible in big companies;

2. to explore the efficiency and significance of the measures related to workplace orientation in case of the Hungarian units of the examined companies;

3. to find out how often the new employees attend organized trainings and what principle the companies use when selecting the employees for the trainings;

4. to find out the interviewed people's opinions about the participants of their onboarding, the participants' activities and based on all this, to attempt to make a priority list;

5. based on the interviewees' opinions, to present the extent they know the elements of corporate culture, their own roles in the organization, how integrated and loyal they are to their workplace;

6. finally, to explore whether there is a connection between the mentor's helping activity, the evaluation of the mentor's personality and role clarity, as well as, whether the latter factor can be related to the evaluation of loyalty.

My basic hypotheses are adapted to the goals and sub-goals of the dissertation and are defined based on the related literature and the preliminary examination results.

H₁ In case of the examined companies, the new workers are presumably helped to receive information related to the local information, work, performance evaluation, earnings and incentives through workplace orientation and the participants presumably consider the information useful.

H₂ In case of the examined organizations, the attendance rate at the various types of trainings is presumably frequent in the first three months following the entry and the employees are selected according to specific principles.

H₃ If the examined companies have a mentoring system to help the employees' adaptation, there is presumably a correlation between the evaluation of the mentor, the time the interviewees spent at the organization and their level of education.

H₄ If the mentoring system is not fully established at the companies included in the research, I assume the activities related to the onboarding of new employees and helping them to perform their tasks are mostly carried out by the immediate coworkers.

H₅ In case of the examined companies, getting familiar with the organization's culture, being integrated into the work group and role clarity are all the results of a longer learning process and personal experience. Thus, these factors may vary depending on the time spent at the company and they may presumably be varied in the groups of employees according to their positions.

H₆ In case of the involved companies, the mentor's personality and activity presumably contribute to the improvement of the new employees' evaluation of their role clarity. The role clarity is presumably is one of the factors in the development of the employees' loyalty.

2. THE PRESENTATION OF THE DATABASE AND THE APPLIED METHODS

My primary research was carried out in the units of four international companies operating in the Northern Great Plain region. Of course, I am aware that these four companies do not represent the statistical population but I think their examination from the aspect of the topic is suitable to reveal correlations, possible contradictions which could serve as a basis for theoretical experts to determine the direction of further research. I also hope that the results of the examinations might help not only theoretical experts but also practical experts.

My research was primarily based on *questionnaire-based interviews*. Thus, I could get quantitative data from the received information. These data can be analyzed with statistical and mathematical methods (TAMUS, 2009). When compiling the questionnaire, I took the literature recommendations (HÉRA – LIGETI, 2005; BABBIE, 2008) and the earlier research exploring the smaller areas of the topic (HAUETER et al., 2003; RAABE – BEEHR, 2003; ROBBINS, 2008) into account. The interviewees are employees working at the Northern Great Plain region units of four international companies for less than three years.

The questionnaire I used during my examination consists of two parts:

- *Interviewee and organization ID* survey form. On one hand, it asks questions about some of the relevant criteria of the organization (its name, seat, ownership structure, number of employees in 2013). On the other hand, it collects the interviewee's data (sex, age, position, scope of activities, the highest level of education, the period of time spent at the organization, the number of workplace switches and if applicable, the previous scope of activities). This survey form gives me an opportunity to carry out further comparative examinations later.
- *Professional questionnaire.* I compiled this questionnaire so that I can examine the interviewees' opinions according to 13 topics, which include the following:
  1. the stress and importance of onboarding among the HR functions;
  2. general orientation (I determined the 21 elements based on the related legal regulations, the literature and the results of my earlier examinations in the US);

3. the factors which help onboarding:
   o written materials received from the organization,
   o information coming from the immediate coworkers,
   o the mentor's helping activity,
   o information received from the superior and others

   (I listed these four elements because I analyze the new employees' relationship to their mentors, superiors and immediate coworkers during the onboarding. I also gave the interviewees the opportunity to name other sources in the 'others' category);
4. the trainings related to onboarding;
5. the mentor's helping activity and personality;
6. the immediate superior's helping activity and personality;
7. the immediate coworkers' helping activity and personalities

   (the questions belonging to topics 5, 6 and 7 were listed based on the examinations of RAABE – BEEHR, 2003);
8. whether the new employee developed a conflict during the onboarding period. If yes, with whom;
9. if the new employee had a conflict during the onboarding period, what its cause was;
10. the knowledge of the organization's culture;
11. the integration into the work group;
12. role clarity (the questions belonging to topics 10, 11 and 12 were listed based on the examinations of HAUETER et al., 2003);
13. loyalty (the questions were determined based on ROBBINS, 2008).

The goal of the questions related to the organization's culture, integration into the work group, the role clarity and loyalty was to look for and reveal correlations but not their complete assessment.

The questionnaire contained single-choice, 1 to 4 scale and rating scale questions as well. In case of the single-choice questions (12 questions in each topic) related to the elements of the workplace orientation and the attendance in trainings, the interviewees could choose one of the following answers: "yes", "no" or "I do not remember". I used 1 to 4 scale

questions only in one case when I examined the factors helping the onboarding process (Question 4). In case of the rating scale questions (12 questions for each topic, except the HR functions and the elements of orientation), the interviewees could rate each factor on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 was the lowest and 4 was the highest rating). The finalization of the applied questionnaire was preceded by test research. I asked 40 employees who were working for less than 3 years for a Hajdú-Bihar County unit of a big international company. By taking the experience of the test research into account, one of the conditions of being included in the sample was to have at least a high school degree. I carried out a *semi-structured interview examination* at the given organization with the help of the HR person responsible for onboarding. The topics of this examination were the same as those of the questionnaire-based examination. This was necessary because I had to examine the opinions received from the employees in the questionnaire-based data processing from the organizational aspect as well. Also, I wanted to compare how the two sides (HR and the employees) evaluated the efficiency of the same activity.

The semi-structured interview examination was carried out with the HR managers of all four examined organizations. My primary data collection is mostly based on my previous international comparative research so *I performed the semi-structured interview examination with American HR managers* via Skype. I considered this justifiable because during my primary and secondary data collection I came to the conclusion that Americans put a greater emphasis on the elaboration and operation of onboarding programs. I translated the interview into English and completed it with questions related to the various definitions (socialization, onboarding, integration, orientation) which can be found in the literature section of the dissertation.

I found the American interviewees with the help of Linkedin professional network. I entered the term "HR director" in the search bar of the site and set the location to "United States". The site listed 100 American HR managers randomly. From research viewpoint, I considered the profit-oriented companies with more than 500 employees as potential organizations to be examined. I chose the companies with 500+ employees because I assumed that companies of that size might be international. I used the data management system of Linkedin for the limitation. I sent letters to 13 e-mail addresses to the HR managers of the relevant companies. Six of them replied and offered their cooperation and

help with the interviews but they refused ro take part in the questionnaire survey. I am aware that the American sample is not sufficient to come to comparable findings since the findings can be objective if uniform methods are applied during the research. Without a substantive comparative analysis embracing all examination questions, I processed and included in my dissertation only the pieces of information I considered usable in Hungary.

After the questionnaire survey, I recorded and evaluated the received data in the SPSS 14.0 statistical program. The basic statistical population of my research consists of 314 individual examinations. I applied various statistical methods during the evaluation. I chose the methods of descriptive statistics to describe the samples and characterize the most important variables.

I calculated arithmetic means except in the case of two questions. When analyzing the answers to the questions related to general orientation and the trainings, I calculated frequency. To process the information belonging to the other questions, I used non-parametric analysis, correlation calculation, cluster analysis and cross tab analysis.

A *non-parametric test* is a procedure in which the hypothesis is not related to a parameter of the distribution (BOLLA – KRÁMLI, 2005). I chose two non-parametric tests: the Mann-Whitney and the Kruskal-Wallis. In case of the correlation calculation, the closeness and the direction of the linear relationship between the variables are examined (SAJTOS – MITEV, 2007). By applying *cluster analysis,* the units of observation can be sorted into relatively homogenous groups based on the variables included in the analysis (SAJTOS – MITEV, 2007). During a cross tab analysis, we try to find out whether two nominal or ordinal variables are related to each other (SAJTOS – MITEV, 2007).

From among the most frequently used indicators I used the chi-aquare test, the contingency co-efficient and Cramer's V. I considered the results of the statistical tests significant if $p<0.05$. In order to be able to perform the detailed examinations and analysis, I sorted the interviewees into the following groups:

1. according to age: under 20, between 20 and 29, 30 and 39, 40 and 49, 50 and 59 and over 60;
2. according to their positions I created four groups: employees, low-level managers, medium-level managers and top-level managers;

3. according to the level of education I sorted the interviewees into 7 groups: high school, technical high school, other high school degree, OKJ degree and/or higher level vocational training, college or university BA or BSc, 5-year university study or MA/MSc training and postgraduate training (PhD or DLA);

4. according to the period of time spent at the organization I created the following groups: max. 3 months, more than 3 months, more than 6 months but max. 1 year, more than 1 year but max. 2 years, more than 2 years but max. 3 years;

5. according to the number of workplace switches: interviewees working at their first, second or third workplace or employees having changed their workplaces more than three times.

During the data processing carried out according to the previously set group-sorting criteria, I encountered the fact that these criteria would make the sample too differentiated. Thus, in some cases, some groups consisted of too few people. Because of this, I merged some groups (for details please see the 1st point of chapter 3.4. on the dissertation) so that the received results should not be biassed.

In case of those interviewees who mentioned the organization included in the examination as not their first workplace, I asked questions about the similarities and differences of their previous workplaces. I also collected data in relation to the organizational parameters. However, I did not use these data in my dissertation due to quantity reasons, so these categories have not been discussed in detail.

3. THE MAIN FINDIGNS OF THE DISSERTATION

I present the results of the examinations only according to their goals and contents. In the first part of this chapter, I present the results related to orientation, then the results related to the training of the workers. After then, I present how the new employees described the help received from the mentor, the superior and the coworkers during onboarding by answering the questions of the examination. The comparative examination of the latter activity tells us how the interviewees rated the participants of onboarding and which institutional form helped them the most.

I also use the interviewed employees' answers to present the knowledge of the organization's culture, how they managed to become integrated into the work group and the extent of their role clarity and loyalty. At the end of the chapter, I present the results of those correlation examinations I use to show the connection between the evaluation of the mentor's activity and how the extent of role clarity was rated. Furthermore, I also present whether there is a correlation between role clarity and loyalty.

The groups created according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees gave me an opportunity to perform detailed examinations according to the various criteria. I did not perform the examinations with all the characteristics when evaluating each question. I could not do so partly due to quantity reasons and partly because I did not consider it progressive from the viewpoint of the topic. Thus, I performed the detailed analysis with those group-generating criteria, which I considered important in order to collect the relevant information in case of the given question.

3.1. Orientation examinations

The purpose of the orientation examination was to explore to what extent the orientation-related measures listed in the literature chapter are relized in case of the examined organizations. Another purpose was to find out how important the employees consider these measures in the onboarding process. Workplace orientation usually takes place on the new employee's first day at work and it is important because its purpose and function are to give basic information about the life and the related activities of the organization. I sorted the related activities into groups according to three topics: the measures helping to acquire the local information, the information about the work and the expectations and the

presentation of the procedures and opportunities related to the performance evaluation, earnings and incentives.

The examination results showed that the orientation at the examined companies helps the new employees' learning process and integration, however, the related measures are not completely implemented. According to the cross tab analysis, the result cannot be justified with the fact that the companies started to pay more attention to orientation in the past one or two years. The semi-structured interview examination revealed that orientation is not closely supervised at the examined Hungarian companies. This is not justified because the employees altogether considered the implementation of the measures important.

3.2. The examination of the attendance in trainings

The examination of the attendance in trainings took place to find out how characteristic the attendance is in the types of trainings listed in the literature chapter in case of the examined companies during the first three months following the entry. I also wanted to find out what principles are applied when the employees are assigned to attend the trainings, whether there is a correlation between the employees and their positions or lack of experience.

The results showed that in case of the examined organizations, the attendance in various trainings is relatively frequent in the first three months following the entry. The results also revealed that the position (except the internal professional trainings) does not determine whether the employees are assigned to attend the trainings in the examined period. The lack of work experience is a principle to assign the employees to attend trainings to the extent that the new employees are assigned only to the most necessary trainings so that their learning process should be faster. Thus, the rate of attendance is higher among those who have work experience.

3.3. The examination of the people being in work relationship with the new employees

The examination of the people being in work relationship with the new employees was intended to find out how the new employees evaluated the professional help received from their immediate superiors and coworkers during the adaptation period and the participants'

personal qualities and attitudes. I thought it reasonable to analyze the participants of onboarding by the same criteria in order to acquire such comparable data which would provide a basis for me to set up a hierarchy among the participants regarding their willingness to help.

While processing the data, I found that only 164 of the interviewed employees had assigned mentors. Therefore, I created two databases to rank the people helping onboarding and to perform various comparative analyses regarding the mentor's activity. I separately examined the information received from those who were helped by mentors and the information received from those who did not have help from mentors.

During the questionnaire survey, the interviewees set up a hierarchy among the mentor, the immediate superior, their coworkers and the written material received from the organization according to the extent these factors helped their adaptation. More than half of the interviewees (89 people) thought that the mentor's activity helped them the most with the adaptation, one fifth of them (33 people) ranked the mentor's activity at the second place, 15% (25 people) ranked it at the third place and only 10% (16 people) ranked it at the fourth place. Thus, three fourth of the interviewees (122 people) ranked the mentor's activity at the first or second place of the hierarchy and only about one fourth of them (41 people) found two or three options among the answers which they regarded more important in their adaptation than the mentor's activity. The conclusion we can draw from this is that in case of the examined companies, the mentored employees relied on their mentors' help and considered their help very important. The mentor's activity is largely influenced by the fact whether the main goals and means of the mentoring system have been defined within the onboarding program and whether the mentor's tasks have been elaborated. Only then can we talk about program-like, system-level mentoring if these conditions are given. According to the interviews performed with HR experts, all the four companies included in the research have mentoring programs. However, the peculiarities of the operation are well demonstrated by the results of the questionnaire surveys which show that a little more than the half of the interviewed 314 people (164) stated that their work was helped by assigned mentors. The semi-structured interviews also revealed that in case of the Hungarian organizations the personal qualities dominate when choosing

mentors. This might explain the interviewees' answers regarding the participation in the mentoring programs.

According to the results of the questionnaire survey, the interviewees evaluated the mentor's helping activity and personal qualities differently depending on their level of education (the more qualified people were more critical) and the period of time spent at the organization (those with 3 to 6 months of employment gave lower average evaluations). This result was confirmed by the significance level based on the Kruskal-Wallis test.

In case of the examinations related to the superiors, more than one fifth of the interviewees having mentors (22%, 36 people) thought that their superior helped their adaptation the most, 40% of them (65 people) rated their superior's help at the second, 23% (38) at the third and 15% (24 people) at the fourth place. 62% of the interviewees (101 people) placed the superior's help at the first or the second place. This leads us to the conclusion that the interviewees considered their superior's help with the onboarding important alongside the mentor's help. 44% of the interviewees not having mentors (62 people) stated that their superiors helped them the most with their adaptation, 35% of them (49 people) put their superior's help at the second, 21% (30 people at the third place. More than three fourth of the interviewees not having mentors (111 people) considered their superiors the first or the second most important regarding their adaptation. This opinion implies that without a mentor, employees need the immediate superior's professional aid support more during the adaptation period. The result also indirectly shows that this kind of activity may take away more than the reasonable amount of time from performing other managerial activities.

The examinations related to the superiors also show that, similarly to the mentor's evaluation, the increase in the level of qualifications means a lower average value in the answers to the questions regarding the superior's activity and personal evaluation. The Mann-Whitney test brought the attention to the fact that new employees need more professional help from the superiors as well. Similarly to the previous cases, the interviewees rated the help with adaptation from their coworkers on a four-degree scale. Less than a tenth (9%, 14 people) of the interviewees having mentors thought that the help received from their coworkers was the most significant during their adaptation period. One

third of the interviewees (54 people) put the coworkers' help at the second, 42% (68 people) put it at the third and 17% of them (27 people) put it at the fourth place. Only 41% of the employees participating mentoring programs ranked their coworkers at the first or the second place.

From the data we can draw the conclusion that the interviewees having mentors thought that help from their mentor and their immediate superior were the most important during the adaptation period, the helping activity of the coworkers only comes after these. 28% of the interviewees (40 people) not having mentors said that they received the most help and support from their immediate coworkers with the adaptation. 37% (52 people) ranked the coworkers at the second place and 35% (49 people) ranked them at the third place. Thus, 65% of the interviewees (92 people) ranked the coworkers' help the first and the second most important. This is 24% higher than in the case of interviewees having mentors. This implies that without a mentor's help, people need not only the superior's professional help but the immediate coworkers' help as well during the adaptation period.

3.4. The examination of the knowledge of the organization's culture

The purpose of these examinations was to find out to what extent the new employees at the examined companies know the organization's culture and also whether there is a correlation between the answers given to the questions and the interviewees' positions and time spent at the organization. I also wanted to find out how important the interviewees consider written materials received from the organization in relation to their adaptation.

The average values of the ratings given to the knowledge of each element of the organization's culture, with the exception of two or three variables, show that the interviewees altogether know the dominating corporate culture.

The written materials received from the organization provide information about the general rules of work and about those regulations of the organization's internal code which concern each and every employee (for details please see chapter 2.3.1 of the dissertation). These regulations are important elements of the organization's culture. Therefore, I considered it necessary to analyze how important these documents were for the interviewees during their adaptation period. The interviewees ranked these written documents, similarly to the previous factors, on a four-degree scale.

Only 13% of the interviewees having mentors (22 people) thought that the information gained from the company written materials helped them the most with their adaptation. 11% of the interviews (18 people) put the significance of the documents at the second place, 18% (29 people) put it at the third place and 58% (94 people) put it at the fourth place. These ratings show that the interviewees consider the significance of the participants more valuable and also show that most of the interviewees did not know the written materials of the organization or they did not size up their importance properly in relation to their adaptation. Among those who were in the sample not having mentors, nearly 28% (39 people) thought that information gained from the documents meant the most help during their adaptation. More than 28% of the interviewees (40 people) put this factor at the second place and 44% (62 people) put it at the third place. Thus, more than half of the interviewees (55%, 79 people) rated the written materials as the first or second most important. This is 31% higher than the value received from those having mentors. This implies that the new employees having no mentors need more help not only from their immediate superiors or the coworkers but they also rely more heavily on the information provided by the written materials.

According to the examination results performed along the superior-employee group-creating factor (except the questions related to the organizational values and behavior), the average value of the answers received from superiors included in the sample is higher in case of all variables than that of the interviewed employees. The examination showed significant differences in case of the seven variables of the Mann-Whitney test. The examination of the knowledge of the organization's culture depending on the period of time spent at the organization shows that the longer the time spent at the organization is, the higher the average values of the answers are. Thus, a kind of continuity can be observed here. The Kruskal-Wallis test showed significant differences in case of five questions along the group-creating factor.

3.5. The examination of the work group level integration

The purpose of these examinations was to find out to what extent the interviewees are integrated into the work group and how much they know about the operational characteristics of that work group. I also set a goal to find out whether there is a

correlation between the answers related to the integration, the interviewee's position and the time spent at the organization.

The results of the questionnaire survey related to the integration show that the interviewees mostly know the operation of their work groups and they have been integrated into it.

The Mann-Whitney test shows that there is a correlation between the integration and the interviewee's position. The result of the Kruskal-Wallis test shows that the longer the time spent at the organization is, the higher the extent of the integration into the work group is.

3.6. The examination of role clarity

The purpose of the examinations related to role clarity was to find out to what extent the interviewees are aware of their roles at the organization. I also set a goal, similarly to the previous two examinations, to find out whether there is a correlation between the answers related to the role clarity, the interviewee's position and the time spent at the organization.

The results of the questionnaire survey show that the interviewees are altogether aware of their tasks and their roles within the organization. The Mann-Whitney test shows a correlation positively discriminating the superiors between the role clarity and the interviewee's position. The Kruskal-Wallis test shows that the longer time spent at the organization means more role clarity.

3.7. The examination of loyalty

The purpose of the examinations was, based on twelve questions, to find out to what extent the interviewees are loyal to the organization. I also wanted to find out whether there is a correlation between the evaluation of loyalty and the time spent at the organization. According to the average value of the answers, the interviewees considered themselves rather loyal than not loyal. However, it must be noted that both the superiors and the employees consider loyalty to the organization a delicate issue and of course the results could have been biassed due to the fear of retaliation. This seems probable based on the answers given in the semi-structured interviews where three of four Hungarian HR experts stated that the high rate of fluctuation causes them a permanent problem. By analyzing the results of the questionnaire survey in detail, it can be stated that the variable

of the lowest average confirms the answers of the interview to some extent. The interviewees gave an average of less than 3 by answering the question whether they would feel worse if they had the same position at a different organization.

When the correlation between loyalty and the time spent at the organization was examined, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed significant differences in case of 6 questions. The average values of the answers received from those working for less than 3 months are the highest. The second highest average value for 8 out of 12 questions was given by those who worked for the organization for 2 to 3 years. This result might be explained by the fact that it takes time for the person to regain the commitment toward the organization following negative experiences after the initial enthusiasm. On the other hand, those employees who get disappointed about the organization might leave by that time. I find it relevant and informative that the lowest average values came from the interviewees (in case of 7 questions) working for the organization between 3 months and 1 year. I think this can be explained by the lack of help and professional support, the increased amount of tasks and the sudden appearance of responsibility.

3.8. Searching correlations

The purpose of the correlation examinations was to find out whether there is a connection between the evaluation of the mentor's helping activity and personality and the answers related to role clarity. If the examinations show a correlation, I set the goal to find out which mentor-related variables are in connection with the most role clarity variables. Finally, I wanted to find an answer whether there is a correlation between the answers related to role clarity and the extent of loyalty. In order to find out if there is a correlation between the answers related to the evaluation of the mentor's helping activity and personality and the answers related to role clarity, I performed the Spearman's rank correlation examination with the related questions. During the analysis, I took only the medium positive ($0.2 \leq r < 0.7$) correlations into account. The values of the correlation coefficients are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The correlation coefficient values based on the answers related to the mentor and role clarity

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Sz1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.242	0.249	0.206	-	-
Sz2	0.221	-	0.234	-	-	-	0.234	0.220	0.267	0.250	-	-
Sz3	0.250	-	0.228	-	-	-	0.213	-	-	-	0.222	0.207
Sz4	-	-	0.312	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sz5	0.216	0.267	-	0.259	-	0.218	0.279	0.321	-	0.218	0.228	0.212
Sz6	0.373	0.374	0.388	0.326	-	0.400	0.403	0.322	0.266	0.279	0.323	0.348
Sz7	0.256	0.336	0.284	0.255	-	0.244	0.251	-	-	-	-	0.281
Sz8	0.213	0,277	0.246	0.209	-	0.214	0.221	0.246	-	-	-	0.226
Sz9	0.326	0.221	0.254	0.305	-	0.273	0.301	0.270	-	0.253	0.344	0.319
Sz10	0.289	0.227	0.227	0.326	0.219	0.281	0.268	0.252	0.293	0.335	0.310	0.284
Sz11	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.316	0.228	-	0.219	0.231	0.310
Sz12	0.296	0.290	0.237	0.320	-	0.310	0.306	0.342	-	0.369	0.384	0.405

Note: ▭ correlates with the most role clarity variables

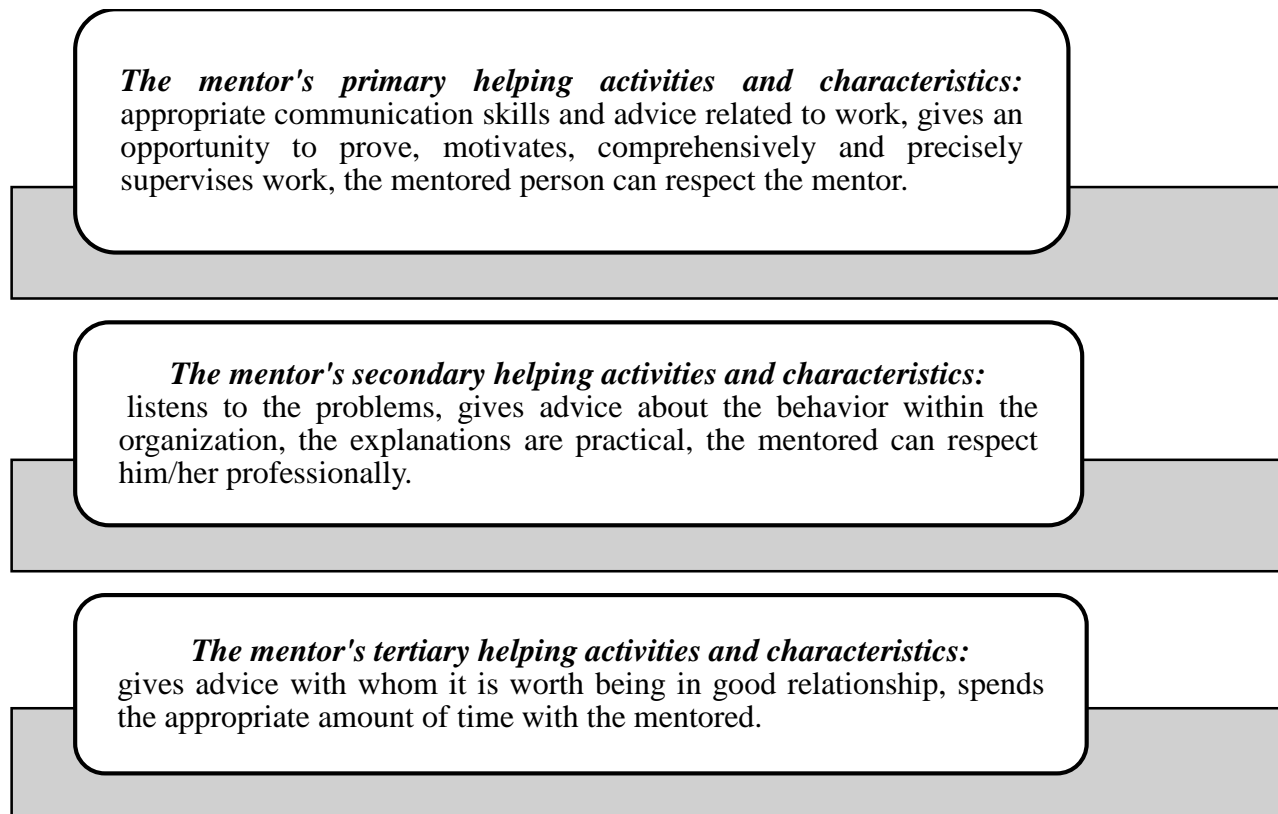*Source: the author's own examinations, 2013-2014*

M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M9, M10, M11 and M12 denote the variables related to the mentor. These are the following respectively: had appropriate communication skills; always listened to my problems; gave advice about work; gave advice about behavior; told me with whom it is worth being in good relationship; gave me practical explanations through examples; sought to give me an opportunity to show what I was capable to do; motivated me; spent the appropriate amount of time with me; comprehensively and precisely supervised my work; I could respect him/her professionally; I respected him/her as a person.

Sz1, Sz2, Sz3, Sz4, Sz5, Sz6, Sz7, Sz8, Sz8, Sz9, Sz10, Sz11 and Sz12 stand for the questions about role clarity. These are the following respectively: I know how much my responsibility is and what tasks I should perform; I know how to perform in each part task; I can determine which part tasks and responsibilities have priority; I know how my

working tools work; I know how to obtain the information needed for my work; I know from whom I should ask for advice; I know who my clients are; I know what is necessary to make my clients satisfied; I know when to make reports; I know what my superiors expect from me; I know how to do the paperwork related to my job; I know the consequences of not performing certain tasks or performing them inappropriately.

The questions about the mentor's helping activity and personality correlate with the number of variables related to role clarity in the following way: communication skills 8, listening to the problems 7, advice about work 9, advice about the behavior within the organization 7, advice with whom it is worth developing a good relationship 1, practical explanations through examples 7, giving an opportunity to prove 10, motivation 9, the sufficient amount of time spent with the mentored 4, comprehensively and precisely supervises the new employee's work 8, the mentored can respect the mentor professionally 7 and can respect the mentor as a person 9. Based on the results, I listed primary, secondary and tertiary tasks and characteristics for the mentor's according to the number of variables they correlate with. The classification is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The priority order of the mentor's activity and characteristics

The mentor's primary helping activities and characteristics: appropriate communication skills and advice related to work, gives an opportunity to prove, motivates, comprehensively and precisely supervises work, the mentored person can respect the mentor.

The mentor's secondary helping activities and characteristics: listens to the problems, gives advice about the behavior within the organization, the explanations are practical, the mentored can respect him/her professionally.

The mentor's tertiary helping activities and characteristics: gives advice with whom it is worth being in good relationship, spends the appropriate amount of time with the mentored.

Source: the author's own compilation, 2014

As it can be read from the above figure, from among the twelve mentor-related variables the following characteristics are in connection with the most role clarity-related questions: communication skills, advice about the work, the opportunity to prove, motivation, the mentor's supervising activity and the mentor's respect as a person. The good communication skills make it possible that the advice given is clear, precise and understandable. The recommendations about work clearly help the individual to become familiar with his/her own role within the organization. Motivation strengthens the attitude toward work, the opportunity to prove strengthens self-confidence and these two factors both contribute to performing the activities more efficiently. The preventive feature of supervising can motivate the new employees in their learning skills and precise work. The mentor's respect as a person is probably relevant in relation to role clarity because most people accept advice from those who are considered as examples and to be followed. The mentor should be open to become familiar with the mentored person's problems, since he/she can help the most efficiently by giving recommendations to solve these problems.

The advice about the behavior within the organization and the practical explanations, the evaluation of the mentor's professionalism are all directly connected to giving organizational and professional knowledge to the mentored. Thus, this knowledge can help the new employee to become familiar with his/her own role within the organization and identify themselves with it.

The mentor's advice regarding with whom it is worth developing a good relationship and the time spent with the mentored are factors which directly affect the development of the new employee's role clarity. However, in my opinion, the sufficient amount of time spent with the mentored is important from two aspects. The mentor should spend sufficient time at each consultating session to find out whether the mentored clearly understands the guidance so that he/she can apply it in his/her work and behavior. The amount of time is also important from a different approach because if the new employee is left alone too early, they can become uncertain about their role.

I performed a cluster analysis with the values of role clarity and loyalty to find out whether there is a connection between the answers given to the questions about role clarity and loyalty. Based on the values, attending that the number of elements in each cluster should not be lower than 25, I separated two groups for role clarity and loyalty each, based on the

interviewees' opinions. The two clusters created during the examination of role clarity were named as "the identified" and "the path seekers". The two clusters created during the examination of loyalty were named as "rather loyal" and "less loyal". I gave these names based on the cluster-creating criteria and the average values given to the variables included in the analysis. I used the analysis of variance to characterize the clusters, since the dependent variables were metric but the independent variables were not metric, thus I characterized the clusters with the help of the cluster-creating criteria, that is, with the average rating values of the groups measured on a four-degree scale (1 to 4). The result of the analysis of variance in case of role clarity is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Clusters based on the role clarity examination

	"The identified"	*"Path seekers"*
I know exactly the extent of my responsibility and what tasks and projects I should perform.	3.84	3.29
I am aware how to perform during each part of a task in order to get my job done.	3.85	3.27
I can find out which tasks and responsibilities should be given priority.	3.76	3.15
I am aware how the tools used in my work (software, programs).	3.60	3.15
I know how to obtain the resources necessary for my job (equipments, tools and information).	3.68	2.99
I know how and from whom I should ask for support/help if necessary.	3.80	3.10
I know who my clients are.	3.79	2.98
I know what is necessary for my clients to be satisfied.	3.83	2.94
I know when to make reports about my work to my superiors.	3.84	2.74
I am aware what my superiors expect from me.	3.85	3.07
I know how to do the paperwork related to my job.	3.89	3.12
I know what the consequences are to others if I do not perform or certain tasks or perform them inadequately.	3.85	3,05
Total (people):	208	84
Distribution of interviewees (%):	71	29

Source: the author's own examinations, 2013-2014

The first cluster is "the identified" where 71% of the interviewees belong. This group of interviewees gave relatively high ratings to almost all of the examined factors and even the

lowest value (3.60) can be considered good. The lowest value given to the twelve variables rated by this group is still higher than the average value (3.45) of the answers received from all the interviewees. This implies that most people in the group are aware of their roles within the organization and they identified themselves with these roles. The second cluster consists of the "path seekers", 29% of the interviewees. The average value of their answers, compared to that of "the identified", is relatively low. It implies that these people did not identify themselves so much with their roles within the organization, they are still looking for their places.

During the examination of loyalty, I used the analysis of variance to characterize the "rather loyal" and less loyal" clusters. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Clusters based on the examination of loyalty

	"Rather loyal"	*"Less loyal"*
I tell my friends that it is good to work in this organization.	3.87	2.77
I feel very loyal to my workplace.	3.75	2.69
I would do almost every extra job just to remain the member of this organization.	3.42	2.29
My own values and those of the organization are very similar.	3.50	2.46
I proudly tell others that I am a member of this organization.	3.79	2.60
I would feel worse if I worked in a similar position at a different organization.	3.29	2.32
It is not difficult for me to follow the organization's policy in important matters.	3.58	2,85
The fate of this organization is important to me.	3.77	2.74
I am willing to make further efforts to help to make this organization even more successful.	3.73	2.56
It has been my best decision to get a job at this organization.	3.72	2.64
My workplace really inspires me, thus I can do my best.	3.68	2.43
Currently, there is a little chance of my leaving this organization.	3.76	2.80
Total (people):	209	94
Distribution of the interviewees (%):	69	31

Source: the author's own examinations, 2013-2014

The first cluster is the "rather loyal" group which consists of 68% of the interviewees. The interviewees of this group gave relatively high ratings to all of the twelve factors. These high average values imply that most members of this group feel loyal to the organization. The second cluster is the "less loyal" group which consists of 31% of the interviewees included in the sample. The average value of the answers received from this group, compared to that of the "rather loyal" group, is low. The values were more than 1.0 lower in case of 9 variables.

I revealed the connection between the clusters created on the basis of role clarity and loyalty examinations by using cross tab analysis. The chi-square showed a significant difference. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: A cross tab analysis between the clusters of role clarity and loyalty

	„The identified"	*„Path seekers"*	*Total*	p<0.05
"Rather loyal"	167	29	196	
"Less loyal"	37	54	91	
Total	204	83	287	

Source: the author's own examinations, 2013-2014

According to the results, 287 people answered the questions belonging to both role clarity and loyalty. Thus, they are the people who could be sorted into the clusters by both factors. Based on the answers, 167 of 287 people are rather loyal and at the same time identified. 29 people are rather loyal but path seekers. Altogether, 91 people belong to the less loyal group. 37 of them could identified themselves with their own roles within the organization and 54 of them are path seekers. 82% of the identified are rather loyal, 18% of them are less loyal, while 65% of the path seekers are rather loyal and 35% of them are less loyal. All this leads to the conclusion that the interviewees having identified themselves with their organizational roles are more loyal to the organization. This proves the correlation between role clarity and loyalty.

4. THE NEW AND NOVEL RESULTS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. In case of the examined organizations, orientation is used to help the new employees to obtain the local information and to master the knowledge about work, performance evaluation, earnings and incentives. The participants consider this important from the viewpoint of their adaptation. I found that the comprehensiveness of the orientation activity, thus its efficiency, can be increased by laying down the range of information to be given and by determining the way of feedback.

To prove the basic hypothesis, I performed questionnaire surveys complemented with semi-structured interviews carried out with HR experts. During the data collection, the interviewees stated whether they had received the information listed in the questionnaire and how important they considered that information from the viewpoint of their adaptation. The average of the ratings given on a 1 to 4 scale was extraordinarily high, especially in case of the information related to work and its assessment and the incentives. However, the interviewees also considered obtaining the local information and the briefing helping orientation important. The delivery of the information was not full-scale though, and the semi-structured interviews revealed the causes. Only three of the four examined organizations laid down the range of information to be delivered during the orientation in writing and they failed to arrange the feedback about the implementation.

2. In case of the companies, participating in the research, the attendance in the various types of trainings also helps the new employees' learning process. The participants are selected according to definite principles.

The examination confirmed the preliminary hypotheses of the research. In the first month following the entry, 90% of the interviewees attended in-house or outsourced professional trainings. In addition, the attendance in various skill-developing trainings came near 110%, which means that some employees might have attended more than one training. The examinations performed along the group-creating criteria confirmed the fact that the employees having previous work experience attend such trainings at a higher rate. In case of the beginners, the employers emphasize the delivery of the information needed for their job in the first three months.

3. The evaluation of the mentor's activity might be varied depending on the time the interviewees have spent at the organization and their level of education.

According to the interviewees' statements, only 54% of them had assigned mentors. Those who had mentors considered the mentors' personal qualities, their helping activity good (the average value of the ratings was between 3.32 and 3.48, except two cases). In addition, more than half of the mentored employees said that it was the mentor who helped their adaptation the most.

During a deeper analysis of the ratings, it was confirmed that the more qualified employees evaluated the mentors' activity more critically, while the most satisfied employees were those working for the organization for up to 3 months.

4. At the examined companies, the learning of the organization's culture, the integration into the work group and role clarity are all the results of a longer learning process and gaining personal experience and vary depending on the time spent there. These factors vary in the groups of different positions as well.

To confirm the basic hypothesis, I was looking for the answer to the questions about the knowledge of the organization's culture, the group-level integrations and role clarity (12 questions for each area). The average value of the ratings in case of the organization's culture was higher in case of the managers and employees working for 2 to 3 years. The Mann-Whitney and the Kruskal-Wallis tests showed significant differences in four instances in case of the managers and in five instances in case of the employees having a longer period of employment. The questions about the group-level integration received higher ratings also from the managers and employees working for a longer period of time. The deeper analysis revealed differences in four instances in case of the leaders and in five instances in case of the employees. The managers gave higher ratings to role clarity, except one question, while the employees gave high ratings to all questions. The deeper analysis revealed significant differences in case of two thirds of the answers received from the employees.

5. In case of the examined organizations, the mentor's personality and activity can contribute to the increase of role clarity in case of the new employees and role clarity is one of the major factors in the development of the employees' loyalty.

To confirm the first part of the basic hypothesis, I carried out comparative examinations in which I wanted to find out whether there is a connection between the evaluation of the mentor's personality and helping activity and role clarity. To reveal it, I performed a Spearman's rank correlation test. With the help of this test, I also revealed what mentor-related variables are connected to the most role clarity variables. This analysis confirmed the basic hypothesis and also gave me an opportunity to set up a hierarchy based on the number of correlations. I could also determine the primary, secondary and tertiary characteristics of the mentor's qualities and activities. To confirm the second part of the hypothesis, that is to reveal the connection between the answers given to the questions about role clarity and loyalty, I carried out a cluster analysis. By performing a cross tab analysis of the clusters created on the basis of the role clarity and loyalty examinations, I could prove that the interviewees who identified themselves with the organizational role are more probably loyal to the organization.

Out of the basic hypotheses laid down before the beginning of the examination, only one thesis could not be proven. It assumed that for lack of a mentor, the activities related to the onboarding of new employees are mostly performed by the immediate coworkers. To confirm the basic hypothesis, I used the rating question used for the evaluation of the mentors' activities. The results show that less than one third of the interviewees (28%) said that they received more help from their immediate coworkers during their adaptation. Thus, this thesis could not be confirmed with the use of the applied method.

5. THE USABILITY OF THE RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS

In this chapter, I draw conclusions based on my research results and come up with suggestions regarding further necessary research. I also make suggestions of the practical use of the examined activities to improve their efficiency.

In case of the companies examined with questionnaire surveys, the delivery of the necessary information was not implemented entirely through *orientation*. From this, it can be concluded that the system is not adequately established. The main reason for this is the fact that the range of information which should be delivered to all new employees is not laid down in writing in case of the examined companies in Hungary. Also, the control of the process, differently from the American companies included in the research, is not organized.

Based on the results related to the *trainings*, it can be stated that the system of the trainings was developed in an expedient way by the examined companies in Hungary. It means that the new employees focus on learning the tasks related to their job mostly in the initial period and they attend only those trainings which are most necessary for them to do their jobs. However, the managers and those who have work experience can expand their knowledge and improve their skills by mastering novel knowledge.

The fact that the *mentoring system* is not established in some of the examined Hungarian organizations cannot be concluded from the results of the questionnaire surveys and the semi-structured examinations. In other companies, this system is just less organized and is not suitable to fully utilize the advantages of formal mentoring. The reason for the latter case is that the goals of the process are not clearly defined and there is not documentation and supervision attached to the system. The selection of the mentors is dominated by the personal qualities. That is why the more qualified interviewees gave low ratings in average to the questions concerning the evaluation of the mentor's helping activity.

In case of the examined companies, the immediate *supervisor* and the *work group* has an important role in the onboarding of the new employees. Their help, professional guidance are most needed where there are not any mentors. The results also revealed that the interviewees rely more on *written materials* if there are not any mentors.

In case of the examined companies, the knowledge of the *organization's culture*, the *integration into the work group* and *role clarity* increase proportionally along with the time spent at the organization. The superiors' level of knowledge is usually higher than that of the employees, which is necessary because of their role and responsibilities within the organization.

The results of the questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews related to *loyalty* point out that some of the employees are not unconditionally loyal. This fact is also confirmed by the high rate of fluctuation at three of the examined companies. Moreover, examination showed that there is a connection between loyalty and the spent time at the organization.

The correlation analysis of the questionnaire surveys performed at the examined companies shows that there is a linear connection between the mentor's helping activity and the role clarity of the mentored. Also, role clarity can be connected to loyalty as well. Based on the result, it seems probable that the mentor's activity contributes to role clarity which affects the individual's loyalty. Based on the results of workplace onboarding, I am making the following *suggestions for practical experts*:

1. I suggest the supervision and completion of the list of information to be delivered during the orientation. The information on pages 20 and 21 could serve as starting points;

2. I consider it necessary to determine the people responsible for performing the activities related to the orientation and to lay this down in the organization's internal regulations*;*

3. It would be necessary to organize the feedback related to the orientation (the American practice might be followed as an example: the new employees and the other participants sign and date the list of information to be delivered, showing that the orientation activities have been implemented);

4. I suggest making the mentoring system complete at the organizations where it has not been introduced yet. The goals of the system, the method of selecting the mentors, the mentor's scope of activities, the procedures related to the feedback and supervision and the deadlines all should be laid down in the internal regulations;

5. I consider it necessary that the internal regulation related to onboarding should contain the supervisors' related tasks and scope and the rules concerning the coworkers' helping activity.

The theses found in the literature section of the dissertation and those in the chapters presenting the results might serve as starting points in the compilation of the onboarding program and regulations.

Based on my research results related to onboarding I consider *further research* necessary in the following areas:

- the effects of onboarding on the individual performance;
- the effect of onboarding program on the performance of the organization;
- the special needs of onboarding in case of people with reduced capacity to work;
- the examination of the costs of onboarding and its effect on the results of the company.

6. LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S OWN PUBLICATIONS

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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapter(s) (2)

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The Candidate's publication data submitted to the iDEa Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of Web of Science, Scopus and Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) databases.

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