Article

Focus on onboarding process: Examining mentoring and training programs from the perspective of HR and employees

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Abstract: In response to the rapid and dynamic changes in the economic environment, companies must improve their processes to maintain competitiveness. This includes enhancing their intellectual capital, with particular emphasis on effective onboarding processes, which play a crucial role in integrating new employees and retaining talent. This enhances the value of the organization's intellectual capital and emphasizes onboarding—the training and integration of new employees—whose proper functioning impacts staff retention. Drawing on both Hungarian and predominantly foreign literature, we highlight onboarding processes and examine their implementation in Hungarian companies of various sizes. The research employed a mixed-method approach, combining semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. In-depth interviews were conducted with HR leaders from 13 Hungarian organizations to explore the existence of mentoring programs. Additionally, 161 employees across Hungary completed questionnaires, which examined their perspectives on onboarding processes and the relationship between mentoring programs and company size. We analyzed the data using chi-square tests to assess the strength of these relationships. While all large companies in our sample had formal mentoring programs, smaller companies displayed more variability, with some relying on informal or ad-hoc onboarding processes. Based on these results, we identified several key areas for improvement in onboarding processes. These include enhancing the structure of feedback interviews, ensuring more comprehensive communication channels, and strengthening mentoring programs across companies of all sizes. By addressing these gaps, companies can improve employee retention, engagement, and overall integration during the onboarding process, contributing to a more stable and motivated workforce.

Keywords: effective workers; feedback conversation; Hungary; knowledge transfer; workforce retention

1. Introduction

In response to the rapid and dynamic changes in the economic environment, companies must improve their processes to maintain competitiveness. This includes enhancing their intellectual capital, with particular emphasis on effective onboarding processes, which play a crucial role in integrating new employees and retaining talent. This increases the value of the organisation's intellectual capital and focuses on integrating and retaining the right people in the company for the long term.

In the 21st century, knowledge has become a sustainable competitive advantage for organizations (Sólyom and Fenyves, 2021). An organization's competitive edge increasingly depends on its ability to acquire, gather, and utilize new knowledge, which is essential for long-term growth and maintaining competitive advantage. In the knowledge-based economy, both the volume of knowledge and the speed at which it

is transmitted are expanding. Companies aim for newly hired employees to quickly become well-trained, motivated, creative, and effective members of the workplace team. As business decisions become increasingly complex, companies need the support of a diverse team to act as an advisory tool to implement well thought-out actions (Ton et al., 2022). Therefore, it is not sufficient to simply find the right person for the right position; a well-organized and documented onboarding process is essential to ensure they become committed and effective workforce members as swiftly as possible. However, as Jeske and Olson (2022) point out in their study, many companies still do not pay sufficient attention to the personalised integration of new recruits, but rather it is a general process that characterises their activities.

Employees with a high level of organisational commitment and cultural intelligence are less likely to leave their jobs (AlMazrouei et al., 2023). This study addresses the tasks of human resource management related to the onboarding, integration, and training of new employees within an organization.

It is crucial that expectations are met from both the company's and the employee's perspectives, as a poorly executed onboarding process can increase turnover if the employee decides to leave the organization. Research shows that normative employee commitment and organisational commitment are critical factors for employee retention (Gelencsér et al., 2024). The onboarding process also promotes commitment, and it is an area where small changes can yield significant results in employee retention (Stein and Christiansen, 2010).

In terms of knowledge transfer, the mentoring and training programs are essential parts of the onboarding and integration process. Therefore, our research primarily examined the presence and emphasis of mentoring programs. Mentoring provides guidance and support, including the mentor's active commitment to fostering the growth and development of the new colleague's knowledge (Bocos et al., 2024). It is important to note that the trust that develops between mentor and mentee facilitates open communication, promotes knowledge sharing and the willingness to cooperate, all of which together contribute to the success of the project (Norena-Chavez and Thalassinos, 2024).

In our research, we sought to answer two main questions. Firstly, whether the companies we studied have onboarding processes in place, and to what extent they place a focus on this onboarding? Furthermore, is there a correlation between company size and the existence of a mentoring program? We investigated the existence of mentoring programs in 13 organizations operating in Hungary, whose HR directors agreed to participate in our research. Additionally, we analysed responses to employee questionnaires to identify the relationship between the presence of mentoring programs and the size of the organization.

Furthermore, we considered it important to examine whether the onboarding plan is documented in a formal manner, ensuring the scheduling, development, delegation, and most importantly, the verification of the process. Feedback, which facilitates not only the verification of the process's adequacy but also the effective monitoring of the new employee's development and the mentor's performance, is crucial. This information is also key to determining the future training programs that the new colleague should attend to enhance their knowledge and to outline a potential career path within the organization.

The document aims to shed light on the current onboarding processes in organizations. Based on the responses of HR leaders who participated in the research and the analysis of employee questionnaire data, it provides inspiration for organizations to develop this area. This research introduces a novel perspective by examining the presence and importance of mentoring and training programs in the onboarding process across companies of various sizes in Hungary. This study sheds light on the unique practices and challenges faced by Hungarian organizations. By analysing how companies of different scales approach onboarding, this research provides fresh insights into role of mentorship and structured training in improving employee integration and performance.

High-quality onboarding processes can minimize defective production in manufacturing, serve as the foundation for the annual training plan, influence and keep employee turnover low, and significantly enhance employee satisfaction (Bowers et al., 2023).

2. Literature review

Hungarian literature relatively seldom addresses onboarding within the scope of human resource management tasks. The emphasis is predominantly on recruitment and selection (Kozák and Csáfor, 2016). This is not only true in the literature, but also in practice, with firms placing more emphasis on recruitment and selection and less on the reception of new employees (Cesário and Chambel, 2019). Among human resource management processes, onboarding is noted by Stein and Christiansen (2010) as the first pillar in employee retention, reducing turnover, and increasing productivity and efficiency. A well-managed and documented process ensures that new employees can perform their tasks to the best of their abilities as soon as possible. However, the authors observe that these training and onboarding processes usually do not last longer than two weeks, and only a few organizations plan this process for more than three months.

Onboarding is a complex process that exists in some form in every organization, with its sub-processes being emphasized differently across companies. Onboarding takes place from the point in the employee's lifecycle when the employee is hired to the point at which the workforce has been transformed into a fully trained and capable of independently, responsibly and effectively performing their duties.

Sub-processes in this section are below:
- Selection
- Orientation programme
- Mentoring and training session
- Feedback

The next important dimension is the level of formality. Thang and Scott (2004) refer to HR formality as the extent to which HR practices are documented, systematic, and institutionalized within organizations. Formal HR processes consist of identifiable rules and regulations that are documented and integrated into the company. An informal mechanism is one where there is no system, and decisions are made on an ad-hoc basis. A well-documented onboarding process makes the training and integration process more transparent, thus presenting a more attractive image of the

company to new employees. The importance of formal processes also appears in Bauer (2010), who identified three levels of onboarding based on the organization's utilization of the four elements of the onboarding process. In the following, I will describe the processes that correspond to Hungarian practice on the basis of the information obtained during our research, as a comparison with the American classification.

The Four C's are:

- Compliance: This is the lowest level, which includes training in basic professional rules and regulations. In Hungarian practice, this is the orientation programme, which is often confused with the training programme and sometimes with the complex onboarding process itself, as we have seen during our research. The organisation needs to design its orientation programmes in such a way that new entrants quickly adapt to the culture and understand what is expected of them (Ghosh et al., 2013).

- Clarification: This level is designed to ensure that newcomers understand the new system, their new job and its expectations. This is where the mentoring and training programme comes in. In Hungarian practice, in those organisations where such programmes do not exist, information is provided as part of the orientation programme, and often the job description also serves this purpose.

- Culture: This is a broad category where employees learn about organisational norms, both formal and informal. In Hungarian practice, this is also present in a wide range. The orientation programme and the mentoring programme are where employees can learn about it in a formal way. Corporate communication channels can also be included here, and what all companies are strong in, according to our research, is building relationships within the company, where the company culture is presented in both formal and informal settings at various company events, organised celebrations and team-building programmes.

- Connection: At this level, the vital interpersonal relationships and information networks that new colleague need to develop. This is a long, time-consuming process, but various tools and methods can help to make it faster and more efficient. Onboarding programmes, mentoring programmes, regular feedback sessions, communication platforms and various team building events can help. In Hungarian practice, in many cases, these supportive tools need to be developed and given more emphases.

According to Bauer (2010), depending on the extent to which companies use the elements of the Four C's, they can be divided into three levels. Depending on the extent to which each organisation use the four building blocks just listed determine overall integration strategy. It can be said that most firms fall into one of the tree levels.

Table 1. Onboarding strategy levels.

Onboarding Strategy Level	Compliance	Clarification	Culture	Connection
1 Passive	YES	SOME	LITTLE/NONE	LITTLE/NONE
2 High Potential	YES	YES	SOME	SOME
3 Proactive	YES	YES	YES	YES

As shown in **Table 1**, onboarding can be divided into the following three levels:

1) Level 1 is passive onboarding which focuses only on introducing rules and guidelines.
2) Level 2 is high potential onboarding which is the level of great possibilities includes, in addition to compliance, coordinated and documented training.
3) Level 3 is proactive onboarding, where all four elements are organized, documented, and part of strategic HR.

The onboarding plan includes a mentoring program where highly knowledgeable and experienced professionals impart their knowledge to new employees. They help navigate the field, provide specialized knowledge, and have a plan or vision for the mentee (Kelló and Szerb, 2014). Kram (1985) highlighted the concept of developmental mentoring in his research. Relationships between mentor and mentee play a crucial role in facilitating career and personal development. The four phases of developmental mentoring—initiation phase, cultivation phase, separation phase, redefinition phase—can vary in length but are significant for both the mentor and the mentee. The latter is also mentioned by Snell and Bohlander (2013), who also note that successful mentoring programmes have been effective in increasing workforce retention.

The tasks of a good mentor are described as:

- listening and understanding;
- challenging and encouraging learning;
- coaching;
- building self-confidence;
- providing wise counsel;
- leading by example and becoming a role model;
- sharing experiences and encouraging.

The mentoring programmes have the potential to support mutual learning relationships and socialisation. At other times, it has acted as a bridge between different groups to enable the sharing and dissemination of experience and knowledge within the wider organisation (Wikstörm et al., 2023). Feedback sessions also play an important role in mentoring. The mentor or trainer cannot be absolutely sure that what he or she has said has been fully understood, so it is his or her responsibility to check this through feedback (Ku and Kleiner, 2020).

Hampel and Lemont (2011) categorise onboarding processes around knowledge, relationships and feedback. Positive feedback, which is extremely important during mentoring and the entire onboarding process, increases motivation and commitment. Also Allen (2008) emphasizes the importance of positive feedback to confirm that the new employee is on the right path. Moreover, leaders should seek both positive and negative feedback from colleagues and mentors regarding the integration and training of new employees. This ensures that management is aware of the process's effectiveness and can make necessary adjustments if required (Gregory et al., 2020). These so-called entry interviews, attended by the direct supervisor, HR representative, and employee, should be conducted in the second or third week after joining the company, and then again in the third month. This practice is missing from most organizations. However, where it is present, it allows for the ongoing examination of integration effectiveness, understanding early exit reasons, and significantly aiding

future training and career path development. Our research supports that in Hungarian practice, these feedback interviews are mostly used by large companies, but often only at the end of the probation period in the third month. Feedback is essential for learning. It helps us identify what we are doing right and what we are doing wrong, all with the goal of improving and becoming better. Immediate reinforcement and small successes propel the individual further along the path of learning. This is no different in the workplace during the onboarding process. The mentor plays a crucial role here as well, as they can observe the mentee's progress and identify areas that need further development (Snell and Bohlander, 2013).

In summary, although Hungarian literature does not emphasize the importance of onboarding processes as much, it is a prominent HR process in foreign literature. Around the turn of the millennium, large multinational corporations and foreign-owned companies brought modern HR principles from foreign practices and incorporated them into the everyday life of domestic organisations (Karoliny, 2008). Mentoring is highlighted everywhere as an important tool for knowledge transfer, contributing to the development of both the mentor and the mentee. A documented and well-organized onboarding process aids in the swift integration of new employees, achieving effective work performance as soon as possible, and reducing turnover.

3. Methodology

The aim of our research is twofold: first, to assess how employers and employees participating in the study perceive the importance of onboarding processes and their presence within their own organizations. Second, we aim to highlight the significance of this human resource management task through the results obtained.

In our research, we employed two distinct techniques. Firstly, we conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews to delve deeper into the subject matter. According to Tamus (2011), acquiring substantive qualitative information requires 10–15 in-depth interviews. We contacted 18 companies in Hungary, of which 13 agreed to participate in the interviews. The study includes both small and medium-sized enterprises as well as large corporations. In terms of industry sector distribution, organizations operating in the automotive, construction, transport, services, hospitality and food sectors. During these interviews, we sought to answer whether the onboarding process is emphasized by companies. Does a mentoring programme or training programme assist the newly arrived employee? Furthermore, we investigated whether these onboarding processes are present formally or informally. How important do companies consider these processes, and do they recognize the crucial role of conducting feedback interviews with new employees during the onboarding process. The opinions and experiences of the HR managers from these 13 companies, along with the perspectives of the interviewed individuals, are better delineated through these mostly one-on-one conversations, allowing for a more detailed examination of personal insights and thoughts on the topic. The interviews were conducted between 22 September and 25 October 2023.

To understand employees' opinions and perspectives, we employed a different technique: online questionnaires were distributed nationwide. The questions in these questionnaires were based on those asked during the in-depth interviews. We received

161 completed questionnaires from various regions in Hungary, from employees actively working in small, medium, and large enterprises during the research period. The questionnaire was launched on 2 July 2023, and closed on 20 October 2023. It included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. For the closed-ended questions, respondents could provide answers on a four or ten-point Likert scale. The responses were analyzed using the Excel Analysis Toolpack (Microsoft Corporation). We utilized the Chi-square test to examine the relationships between different variables. It was crucial for us to analyze the data from the perspective of the companies as well as based on the employees' experiences, examining them separately and in conjunction with each other. This was greatly facilitated by the fact that the size scale of the organizations was nearly identical for both the companies participating in the in-depth interviews and the employees completing the questionnaires. In the employee questionnaires, we also asked whether a mentor assists the new colleague in their training and integration. How effective did they find this? Furthermore, we investigated the form in which employees receive the necessary information. We were also curious about the reasons that drive employees to leave their jobs and companies. To explore these reasons, we used an open-ended question in the workforce questionnaire, allowing respondents to articulate in their own words the reasons for their job changes.

4. Result and discussion

The two research results—their differences or similarities—are presented together below. In each session of analysis, data from questionnaires and interviews are analysed separately and in relation to each other. In each session, we will examine in detail how the quantitative results of the questionnaire data collection relate to the deeper qualitative information obtained from the interviews. In addition, we will explore patterns and trends that are common and different in the results obtained from the two different data collection methods. Comparing the data will provide an opportunity to gain a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study and to understand the reasons behind any differences.

4.1. Distribution by company size

It was considered important to examine the distribution of employees by firm size in the two surveys to see whether the data from the different surveys were relevant for comparison. **Table 2** shows the distribution of the respondents to the questionnaire survey by firm size, and **Table 3** shows the distribution of the 13 firms that participated in the in-depth interview by firm size.

The two tables show that, with the exception of the micro company, the breakdown by company size is similar in terms of the size of the participants in the two different surveys. There is likely to be a better process of onboarding in a large company environment—so the sample, although not representative, is likely to provide useful experience, and the questionnaire complements the interviews well. Thus, a comparison of the research results is realistic for the following.

Table 2. Distribution by company size for the questionnaire survey.

Distribution by company size	Frequency	Percentage
Micro enterprise (2–8 employees)	14	9%
Small company (9–49 employees)	23	14%
Medium-sized company (50–249 employees)	29	18%
Large company (250 or more employees)	95	59%
	161	100%

Table 3. Distribution by company size for the interview survey.

Distribution by company size	Frequency	Percentage
Micro enterprise (2–8 employees)	0	0%
Small company (9–49 employees)	2	15%
Medium-sized company (50–249 employees)	3	23%
Large company (250 or more employees)	8	62%
	13	100%

4.2. Mentoring and training programme

As indicated in the theoretical part, mentoring is key to the successful integration of a new employee as soon as possible. It is a fundamental expectation of any organisation that its new employee should be a committed member of the organisation as soon as possible, motivated, creative and quick problem solver, and an effective worker. So we looked at both sides of the coin to see whether mentoring is present in organisations.

In the questionnaire-based research, we posed a closed-ended question regarding whether a mentor assisted the new employee during the onboarding process. This multiple-choice question allowed respondents to select only one of four options, where we were also interested in whether the presence of a mentor facilitated the onboarding process or if the employee did not feel that it made the onboarding easier. Based on the responses received, 61.5% of respondents (99 individuals) indicated that the presence of a mentor assisted their work, while 11.2% (18 individuals) reported having a mentor but did not feel that it contributed to efficiently performing their new tasks. Summing these two results, it can be stated that out of 161 respondents, 117 employees indicated that their companies have a mentoring program in place, even though its effectiveness may be questionable in some cases.

Table 4. Distribution between large companies and mentoring scheme.

Monitored board				Expected board		
Organisations	Without mentor	With mentor	Total	Without mentor	With mentor	Total
Large company	23	72	95	25.9627	69.0373	95
SME	21	45	66	18.0373	47.9627	66
Total	44	117	161	44	117	161

Subsequently, we sought to find a correlation between the existence of a mentoring program and the distribution by company size. We analysed the data using

the Chi-square test but did not find a significant relationship between the two variables (**Table 4**).

Probability value (*P*) with Chi-square test: $0.28673 < 0.01$. This inequality is not true, so there is NO significant correlation between the two variables.

During the in-depth interviews conducted with HR managers of the organizations, interesting responses emerged regarding the mentor or trainer programs. Among white-collar workers, a functional mentoring program is in place in three companies, all of which are large enterprises. This means that not all eight large companies have mentoring programs for white-collar workers. In some large enterprises, mentoring programs are implemented primarily in departments with a large number of employees. Nevertheless, even in smaller departments, a professional introductory program is prepared for each job position, which includes various training sessions managed by the supervisor, and documentation of the training is also maintained.

Regarding blue-collar workers, four organizations do not have any trainer or mentoring programs, which include three medium-sized enterprises and one large enterprise. The large enterprise that provides a mentoring program for its white-collar workers does not find it necessary to implement such a program for its blue-collar workers.

For the sake of comparison between the two research studies, if we do not distinguish between the mentoring programs for white-collar and blue-collar workers—since this distinction was not made in the questionnaire responses—it can be stated that out of the 13 companies, three do not have any mentoring or trainer programs in place. However, one of these companies is in the process of developing such a program and plans to introduce it in the future. Additionally, it is noteworthy that one organization operates both programs with completely different meanings. In this organization, the trainer program is responsible for professional training of the blue-collar staff, while the so-called mentor is the person who accompanies and assists the new employee from the second day of their employment to help them integrate.

We found that onboarding processes, due to their complexity, are present in some form or another in every company, regardless of size. Narrowing down the area of investigation, we focused on mentoring programs, which are crucial for the quick and effective transfer of knowledge, and found that they are present in different forms and with varying emphasis. Based on the responses from the in-depth interviews, it can be stated that all large enterprises have some form of mentoring or trainer program, whereas three medium-sized enterprises do not. Contrary to the employee questionnaire results, this indicates that there is a correlation between company size and the existence of mentoring or trainer programs. Although we cannot substantiate this finding with data from the national employee survey, we can state that all large companies involved in the in-depth interviews had mentoring programs during the study period. In the case of small and medium-sized enterprises, we see lower figures, i.e. mentoring programmes and organised training are not provided, but the response rates suggest that there is a positive trend for the future. In other words, the basic elements of a conscious onboarding process have started to be incorporated into the everyday practice of smaller enterprises. The conclusions of the interviews show that they have apparently lagged behind larger organisations, so we are confident that the findings of our research can empower SME managers to improve in this area.

However, the effectiveness of these programs cannot be determined from this survey, and further research would be worthwhile, as responses from the employee surveys revealed that in many cases, although a mentoring program existed, employees did not feel its supportive, effective impact. It would be worth investigating what kind of planning and preparation takes place in organizations before selecting and inviting mentors. Are there regular and quality feedback discussions where adjustments can be made to either the mentor or the methods and tools of mentoring during the process?

4.3. Information channels during the onboarding process

Digitalization and technological advancements have paved the way for the implementation of the most diverse and modern tools in the onboarding process. Companies that keep up with these developments and adapt their HR tasks accordingly can now transfer knowledge not only through printed training materials but also through simulation exercises, robot simulations, augmented reality (AR glasses), or e-learning training. The question of which tools are used to transfer information during the onboarding process was included in both the interviews and the employee questionnaire. In the questionnaire, respondents could choose from multiple options and select more than one.

Table 5. Ranking of information transfer mods.

Source of information	Frequency	Rank
Printed training documents	61	3
Company database	48	5
Internal training, corporate training	56	4
On-the-job	111	1
Information transfer by a mentor	75	2
Simulation methods (robot simulation, role play, simulation exercises)	4	9
Presentation	26	7
E-learning	36	6
Others	19	8

The most frequently chosen method as shown in the **Table 5**. was on-the-job learning, selected 111 times. The second most common method was information transfer by a mentor, chosen 75 times. Finally, the third most frequent method was the traditional approach of using printed training materials, selected 61 times. The responses revealed that most places do not have access to modern options like online training materials, simulation methods, or AR glasses.

Based on the responses received during the interviews, it can be said that the most frequently mentioned method of knowledge transfer by HR leaders was on-the-job learning (mentioned by 13 companies). The second most mentioned method was the mentor program, which is in place at 10 companies. The third most mentioned method was e-learning, mentioned by 4 out of the 13 companies.

Comparing the two surveys, it is clear that the top two most frequently mentioned methods of information transfer are the same. Unfortunately, more modern tools, which could create an efficient onboarding process, are not widely used by companies.

Here, we would like to mention that the efficiency of onboarding can be increased, and the workload of mentors and trainers can be reduced with simulation training, AR glasses training, or e-learning, which are becoming more widely available due to digitalization and Industry 4.0 innovations. Artificial intelligence (AI) can also be a helpful tool in the onboarding process. It can speed up and smooth out the learning process for new employees. AI can assist in planning, organizing, and coordinating training.

An AI-based virtual assistant can handle general questions during onboarding, such as those related to organizational structure, rules, and regulations, allowing the HR department to focus on other tasks. For example, it can provide personalized support to employees or take on other higher-level tasks (Ahmić, 2023).

4.4. Feedback conversation

The importance of feedback and reassessment has already been mentioned in relation to the mentoring program in the literature review. Unfortunately, this may be the area to which companies devote the least time and energy. This is the most critical area, as without feedback, we cannot be sure if things are working properly, if the direction is correct, and the absence of these discussions can lead to unexpected employee departures. In many cases, there is no discussion with the employee even before the end of the probationary period, resulting in a lack of two-way communication about whether there are areas needing improvement or if the employee has excelled in a particular task, demonstrating talent that could form the basis for further career planning. Frequent appraisals and feedback sessions help employees see how they are improving, increasing their motivation to develop and improve further (Behery, 2021). Although some mention satisfaction surveys, among the 13 organizations participating in the research, four do not conduct such surveys at all. In four companies, these surveys exist but are not focused on the onboarding process or how the new employee feels during the initial period. Instead, they measure the satisfaction of departmental collectives once a year compared to the previous year. Only five companies formally evaluated employee satisfaction with a focus on new hires, but these are mostly at the end of the probation period, which may result in missed correction opportunities that could facilitate a quicker and smoother training process.

We compared these results with the responses to one of the open-ended questions in the employee survey. The turnover rate, the retention of employees, is one of the most important indicators by which we can measure the health of an organisation. When an employee leaves the company, he takes his knowledge with him, especially his tacit knowledge and established relationships (Ghosh et al., 2013). It was very interesting and somewhat unfortunate to see the ranking obtained after processing the data. In the open-ended question, participants could explain in their own words the reason for leaving their previous job. We wanted to know the reasons behind employees leaving the company. We filtered the question to determine how many of the 161 respondents had changed jobs before, thus asking this question only to the 118 who had. We received two unqualified answers, so we examined 116 reasons. Most employees cited professional reasons for their departure. In 41 cases, they mentioned

professional development, advancement, challenges, or a higher position as the reasons for leaving. The second most frequently mentioned reason was inadequate compensation, while the third was equally divided between family reasons and an unsuitable work environment.

It was interesting to see that professional reasons and the lack of professional challenges led this survey. This suggests two potential issues, which, of course, are only hypotheses requiring further research for confirmation. If these reasons are for leaving within six months, the problem may lie in recruitment and selection, meaning the right person was not placed in the right position, or in the lack of proper onboarding, including mentoring and feedback to assess needs and competencies. In relation to recruitment, Cook (2020) notes that employers need to carefully analyse their recruitment sources to determine which ones will produce the good employees who will stay with them. If the departure citing the leading reason occurs after more than six months of collaboration, the issue likely lies in the absence of regular feedback discussions, satisfaction measurements, and career planning.

This would be the task of performance management, which develops individual performance. The performance management cycle includes five main elements: agreement, measurement, feedback, positive reinforcement and dialogue. If it works properly, the employee can be recognised through the results of feedback, the company can provide performance opportunities, the employee can be given more scope to develop skills and career paths can be built (Amstrong, 2012). In the context of workforce development and career planning, Mondore, Douthitt and Carson (2011) write that participation in firms' career development programmes has been shown to increase employee productivity, engagement, reduce turnover and thus contribute to succession planning efforts. Also, well-structured career development initiatives attract talent and thus keep the organisation competitive in the labour market. And Broek (2024) notes that employee motivation can be triggered by the proper functioning of performance management.

5. Conclusion

The training and integration of new employees, known as onboarding processes, are already an essential and emphasized part of human resources in organizations abroad. We wanted to explore how central these processes are in Hungarian companies of various sizes and how the employees themselves perceive them. The research also highlighted that traditional methods play a dominant role in the transfer of information and knowledge during the onboarding processes. Innovations in digitalization and Industry 4.0, such as simulation training, AR glasses, and e-learning opportunities, are not present in organizations' onboarding processes. In the future, it would be worthwhile to conduct further research on the possibilities of introducing and applying these technologies to better leverage their advantages. International research consistently highlights the growing emphases on digital and innovative onboarding processes, such as the use of AI-driven tools, AR-based training, and e-learning platforms. For example, a study by Bauer (2010) suggests that digital onboarding methods not only accelerate employee integration but also enhance engagement and retention. In contrast, our research found that Hungarian organizations still rely

heavily on traditional methods. This gap underscores the need for Hungarian companies to explore these emerging technologies to stay competitive and improve onboarding efficiency.

Feedback sessions, which are almost universally absent or not focused on new colleagues and onboarding processes, are the basis for training, career path development and the launch of employee motivation. At this point, we used the analysis of responses to an open-ended question from the employee survey as support. References such as those by Hampel and Lemont (2011) and Stein and Christiansen (2010) emphasize the role of feedback sessions in fostering continuous improvement in onboarding. However, unlike our results, feedback mechanisms are an important part of the integration process and are given high priority in the international experiences (Anglin et al., 2021). Incorporating feedback into the onboarding process is essential for enhancing employee satisfaction and productivity. Best practices identified in recent research highlight the importance of structured communication, personalized feedback, and continuous engagement. Regular, empathetic feedback helps employees feel valued and recognized, which is vital for their morale and productivity. Utilizing technology to facilitate feedback can streamline processes and ensure timely recognition of achievements (Walker, 2024). While these practices are effective, organizations must also be aware of the potential challenges in implementing feedback systems, such as varying employee preferences and the need for ongoing training to ensure feedback is delivered effectively.

In summary, we aim to convey an important message to organizations: in the age of the knowledge-based economy, the amount of knowledge is expanding, as is the demand for the speed of knowledge transfer. Knowledge, therefore, becomes central, and its transfer through a well-organized mentoring program and feedback discussions, which serve as the foundation of performance management, is key to retaining committed, motivated, and efficient employees. The findings from this study offer valuable insights that extend beyond the Hungarian context. By examining the role of onboarding, mentoring and training programs across various company sizes, the research provides a framework that can be applied to organizations globally. These recommendations can assist companies in improving onboarding processes, reducing turnover, and enhancing employee integration in diverse international business environments. While the research offers valuable insights, certain limitations must be considered. The sample size, which primarily focuses on Hungarian companies, may not fully capture onboarding practice in other regions or industries. Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data, which can introduce biases. Future research could broaden the geographical scope and include more diverse range of company sizes and sectors to better generalize the findings.

By addressing these gaps, companies can improve employee retention, engagement, and overall integration during the onboarding process contributing to a more stable and motivated workforce.

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