

## ASSURANCE OF WORK QUALITY THROUGH ONBOARDING PROCESS IN TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT

Patryk FELICZEK<sup>1\*</sup>, Paweł NOWICKI<sup>2</sup>, Piotr KAFEL<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu; patryk.feliczek@ue.poznan.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-1209-9613

<sup>2</sup> Department of Quality Management, Krakow University of Economics; nowickip@uek.krakow.pl,  
ORCID: 0000-0002-7496-0157

<sup>3</sup> Department of Quality Management, Krakow University of Economics; kafelp@uek.krakow.pl,  
ORCID: 0000-0002-4140-8366

\*Corresponding authors

**Purpose:** The aim of this article is to analyze and evaluate practices related to onboarding process of temporary employees in companies in the logistics and warehouse industry (services). Additionally, the purpose of this article is to recommend activities, that can be implemented in the organizations in order to achieve better quality of work and ultimately increased quality of services, provided by the temporary employees.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study was preliminary and based on conducting a pilot qualitative study using the method of individual in-depth interview (IDI). The study covered the subject of the onboarding process of temporary employees in logistics and warehouse organizations operating in the Great Poland region. The article presents the results of the study conducted among temporary employees.

**Findings:** The main aspects, covered in the study, regarding onboarding process are related to the way the onboarding process has been performed, what information has been passed to the temporary newcomers and how they have been welcomed and trained. Authors suggests recommendations to the organizations to improve this process.

**Research limitations/implications:** The limitation of the study was the analysis of the practice of just 25 employees in 3 companies. The results of the initial study might be subjected to further study, in a full scope. At the same time competences' development process for temporary employees may be also examined. Collecting the data from different HR processes, applied within the temporary employees' community, will make it possible to build a full picture of the practices used in organizations. This picture together with the analysis and recommendations will help companies, using temporary form of employment, to improve their process to achieve desired results in terms of quality.

**Practical implications:** The results of the study might be used by the companies interested in the form of temporary work and companies struggling with lowering quality of products or services as a result of employing temporary employees.

**Originality/value:** As the temporary work in Poland usage is important and this importance has increased companies need to understand the factors influencing the quality of temporary employees' work. This area has not been explored enough through research study.

**Keywords:** temporary employment, onboarding, agency, quality.

**Category of the paper:** Research study.

## 1. Introduction

Temporary work, regulated in Polish legislation, is an important form of providing human resources for work in various industries. In Poland, the logistics and warehousing industry uses temporary work to the greatest extent, and the main work then includes sorting, packaging and packaging. A significant share of temporary work in the logistics and warehouse industry is due to the high seasonality of work performed in this form of activity.

The main feature of temporary work is high flexibility in recruiting employees and resigning from their services. Temporary work is characterized by the presence of three entities - a temporary worker, a user employer and a temporary employment agency. A temporary employment agency acts as an official employer however the main role is at the employer-user side, as this is the company that needs such employment form.

In addition to the positive aspects of using a temporary form of work, there are also elements that can negatively affect the organization. These aspects are mainly related to the temporary employees themselves, whose involvement may be lower than in the case of permanent employment. This, in turn, can affect the quality of their work, and consequently affect the quality of products or services offered by the organization.

According to the research, that can be found in the literature, increasing the number of temporary employees, in an organization, causes the decrease in the quality level of manufactured products and provided services.

Organizations take various actions aimed at minimizing the negative effects of temporary work. The main activities certainly include those that occur in the area related to human resources management. It is this organizational area that is responsible for shaping the processes occurring in the employee life cycle. These processes include recruitment and hiring, onboarding of new employees, development of their competences and offboarding. After the phase of selecting and hiring an employee (in the case of temporary employees, employment is carried out by a temporary employment agency), a very important process is to introduce (onboard) the new person to work so that the person finds himself properly in the new environment as soon as possible and acquires the competences that are necessary to perform the tasks. So in this paper the focus has been put on the onboarding process.

Based on the above, the aim of this article is to analyze and evaluate practices related to onboarding process of temporary employees in companies in the logistics and warehouse industry (services). Additionally, the purpose of this article is to recommend activities, that can be implemented in the organizations in order to achieve better quality of work and ultimately increase quality of services, provided by the temporary employees.

## 2. Onboarding process characteristic

The next stage, after the recruitment process and selection of a candidate for work, is the process of its onboarding. Onboarding has been considered as one of the human resource practices and one of the important processes in the organization. It serves vital role in assuring competent manpower to complete organizational tasks and achieve competitive advantage (Jeske, Olson, 2021). During the onboarding process, a new employee is introduced to the position and given an overview of the company's principles, objectives, guidelines, procedures, and organizational culture (Pinco, Salanta, Beleiu, Crisan, 2024). For employees, onboarding process plays a significant role as they join new organization and new team, move into new work settings, and assume new responsibilities (Adler, Castro, 2019). Ultimately, through onboarding process, employees should feel valued and equipped with all the necessary tools to be able to complete their tasks (Kowtha, 2018).

Bauer and Erdogan (2010) have been widely cited, within years, with their definition of onboarding. The authors have suggested that the onboarding process is like a process of socialization and can be understood as transition from being outsiders in a company to insiders. This definition is a very general one and within 14 years there have been many changes also to human resources processes and how they have been performed. Following that there have been many other definitions proposed highlighting broader scope of the onboarding process. Basing on the definitions, the onboarding is not only the process of introducing newcomer to the organization and the tasks but assuring that the newcomer understands the organization's values, goals, policies, processes and organizational culture (Caldwell, Peters, 2018). This is aimed to achieve required level of engagement, work quality, productivity and lowering the attrition rate (Kumar, 2017).

The content of the onboarding process will definitely depend on the type of organization (e.g. production company or service provider), level of the position in the organization structure and the position itself (Klein, Polin, 2012). On the other hand, in many organizations the onboarding process is being divided into two parts. First part, very general, does not depend on the position or position level in the organization structure, and it consists basic information to be passed to all the newcomers. Second part has been usually more specific, to the position being fulfilled by employed person.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the onboarding process depend on both the candidate and the organization. In terms of the candidate, the result of the onboarding process certainly depends on the competences acquired so far, predispositions to acquire new elements of knowledge and then use them within a specific job position (Ciekanowski, 2012). The candidate's approach to work and his or her employee duties also seems to be no less important. On the part of the organization, in turn, it is expected to provide the necessary implementation tools and conduct theoretical and practical training.

In the context of this publication and the research carried out, the focus should be on the organization's approach to the implementation of the employee onboarding process. On the one hand, it is important to provide the necessary information about the organization, the prevailing rules, and working conditions so that the employee can move comfortably in the new work environment. On the other hand, without providing substantive information about the work performed, in the form of on-the-job training, it is also impossible to expect the correct performance of tasks and obtaining the required level of quality of the work performed. Of course, it can be stated that conducting on-the-job training in the form of on-the-job training is an obligation of the employer, resulting from the provisions of the labor law, and in this respect, it is not voluntary (Act of 27 July 2004). However, in practice, organizations represent different approaches to the implementation of the employee onboarding process. This diversity, in the opinion of the authors of the publication, is one of the elements causing the level of quality of work provided to be different in an organization that has only conducted mandatory training, e.g. on work instructions for a given position, and different in an organization that has a standardized and extensive employee onboarding plan (Gajda, 2019). Such a plan can cover a wide range of aspects related to the work to be performed. Moreover, the implementation process can be carried out by various functions in the organization, depending on the topic discussed (e.g. quality, technology, maintenance). In this way, you can provide a broader perspective in learning about the specifics of the organization.

### **3. Relation between onboarding process and temporary work quality**

Employees, by default, shall make sure that the products and services the company delivers to its customers are in accordance with the specification. This statement requires of course the assumption that the specification is also correct, and its quality has been assured. There are many factors influencing the product and service quality however here, in this article, we focus purely on the manpower performance in this scope. Line employees can assure the product and service conformance by carrying out their duties in line with the policies and guidelines, that have been established by the management and included in work procedures and instructions (Feliczek, 2024).

As the available research shows, increasing the number of temporary employees, in an organization, causes the decrease in the quality level of manufactured products and provided services (Wiengarten, Onofrei, Fynes, Humphreys, 2020).

When discussing the relationship between the process of onboarding a new employee and the quality of temporary work, a key question should be asked (Antenor, 2021). The question is whether the way and scope of the implementation of a temporary employee should differ from that which takes place in relation to employees employed in the organization on the basis

of an employment contract (in the same positions). Assuming that temporary employees are required to have the same level of quality of work (which in turn will translate into the quality of products and services) as employees employed under an employment contract, the answer to the question seems to be negative in principle. Of course, there are some elements in which this process may differ, and these elements can be reduced to formal aspects (Radzividlo, 2020). According to the applicable legislation, the employer-user is not a formal employer, therefore the issues of concluding a temporary employment contract, making the required registrations of the employee in various organizations, remain the responsibility of the temporary employment agency (Act of 9 July 2003). Otherwise, contingent employees still need to be treated with the same level of attention and care during the onboarding process.

Given the characteristics of temporary work, onboarding a temporary employee can seem like a time-consuming step for an organization that can be skipped (Gultom, Liyas, 2023). Such an approach may be supported by the temporality of the work performed. One of the main reasons why proper onboarding is important is that it impacts the entire employment experience. A properly structured induction program can help temporary employees feel welcome, appreciated, and prepared for their new role, even for a defined period of time. This, in turn, can lead to increased productivity, commitment and job satisfaction, which will be expressed by following the rules of the organization and following instructions and guidelines containing requirements or good practices for manufacturing products or providing services (Cillo, Garcia-Perez, Del Guidice, Vicentini, 2019). Not having a proper onboarding process can lead to feelings of confusion, confusion, and disengagement, which can negatively impact the quality of work provided (Murgosky, 2023).

Certainly, an effective process for the induction of a temporary employee, as well as an employee employed under an employment contract, is to provide a comprehensive orientation program. In addition to the standard elements of the onboarding process found in organizations, it is increasingly important to provide temporary employees with a direct supporter in the organization (the so-called buddy), who will be a kind of shadow of the new employee (Ashurst, 2020). The onboarding process is an ongoing process that doesn't end on the first day. The onboarding process, depending on the organization, may last for a different period of time, until the employee can be considered independent to perform tasks as required.

## **4. Temporary employees' onboarding process based on companies from logistics and warehouse industry**

### **4.1. Metod of the study**

The subject of the pilot preliminary study were temporary employees working in logistics and warehousing companies in Great Poland. The study was aimed at obtaining information on

how the personnel management processes, towards temporary employees, have been performed by the employer-users. The intention was to gather information which can be used to understand, why the temporary employment has caused lowering level of quality of products and services (via lower level of quality of work). Basing on the information gathered it would be also possible to suggest the recommendations to the companies using the temporary form of employment.

As it has been mentioned above in the study broader scope of personnel management processes have been considered (such as recruitment, pre-boarding, onboarding, competence development as well as working conditions). However, in this text the authors focus only on the onboarding process.

The study itself was based on the In-Depth Individual Interview (IDI) method, which covered 25 temporary employees in 3 companies. The interviews have been conducted with the use of particular form. The interview form has been divided into 4 categories, reflecting different processes of personnel management, and followed by the survey metrics. IDI have been conducted with the employees by one of the authors personally during the period of November 2023 till February 2024.

The analysis of the data obtained, which is discussed later in this chapter, consisted in the assessment of the possible impact of practices concerning the process of onboarding a temporary employee on the quality of work performed by employer-users and, consequently, on the quality of services.

As previously specified, the study included 25 temporary employees. The survey was intended for employees who met the following requirements:

- have at least two years of experience as temporary employees in the logistics and warehousing industry or in the production of products, and
- have at least six months of experience working for an employer-user in the logistics and warehousing industry.

The temporary employees who were subjected to the IDI study came from four companies located in the Poznań area.

The study included both men and women, with 52.6% of women and 47.4% of men participating. Half of the survey participants (50%) are young people aged 25-31. 20% of the respondents are aged 39-45, while 15% of the participants represent the 18-24 and 32-38 age groups. The presence of different age groups indicates a diverse approach to the subject of the study, which can lead to richer and more diverse results. The majority of the survey participants, as many as 65%, are of Polish nationality. The second largest group, accounting for 20% of the respondents, were employees from Ukraine. A smaller percentage of respondents were represented by citizens of Belarus (10%) and Georgia (5%).

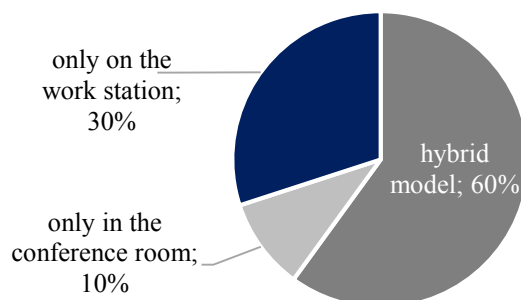
In the process of identifying the surveyed group, temporary employees, they were asked about the number of employer-users for whom they had worked in the last two years. The vast majority of respondents (75%) had worked for one or two employer-users, while the remaining 25% had experience working for three or four employer-users.

#### 4.2. Results of the study

During the in-depth interview, the temporary employees were asked to answer questions about the course of the onboarding process in their current workplace, at the employer-user. Questions about the implementation process were based on elements such as: where the implementation process was carried out, what elements of knowledge about the organization and quality aspects were transferred, what support they received in this process and what are the directions of improvement of this process.

In the first place, the temporary employees were asked where their onboarding process took place. The authors' experience shows that companies use three approaches to this process, in this respect. The first solution is to carry out the onboarding process directly at the workplace (dedicated training for a given employee), and the second solution is based on training conducted in a conference room. The third solution is a hybrid solution, consisting in organizing implementation in a conference room, and then continuation at the workstation. Part of the process, carried out in the conference room, includes general aspects, such as: information about the company, personnel topics, vision and mission of the organization, general quality aspects, environmental aspects, aspects related to safe and healthy work. The second part of this hybrid model is carried out at the workplace – then the training is usually dedicated to a specific employee and the scope of their responsibilities.

Based on the results of the survey, 60% of respondents received training in a hybrid form (as defined above), 30% directly at the workplace, and only 10% had training only in a conference room. The results of this part of the study are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Place of onboarding process.

Source: Own study.

Taking into account the fact that 90% of employees have undergone on-the-job training, including 60% additionally in the conference room, in the opinion of the authors of the publication, there is a good signal and such a practice should be continued in enterprises. This increases the likelihood that employees will acquire the necessary knowledge in a practical way, which will allow them to perform their work in accordance with instructions, ensuring a high level of quality of work, and thus the implementation of the required level of service.

In the next part of the in-depth interview, the respondents were asked what aspects were raised as part of the process of introducing them to work. This question was asked separately in relation to the implementation of the induction process in the conference room and at the workplace (depending on where the implementation process took place). The aspects about which the respondents were asked are as follows:

- regulations at the Employer (e.g. work regulations, monitoring regulations, GDPR),
- health and safety rules,
- Employer's clients,
- quality management systems implemented at the Employer (np. ISO 9001),
- quality objectives at the Employer,
- consequences of quality errors for the Employer,
- consequences of quality errors for the customer,
- specific customer requirements,
- work instructions.

Figure 2 presents the results of the study on these aspects of implementation, in total in relation to implementation in the conference room and at the workplace.

When discussing the results presented in Figure 2, it is necessary to focus in particular on questions and answers related to qualitative aspects.

In the field of systemic quality management (including the quality management systems implemented by the organization), a significant number of respondents (76% and 59%) answered that they were not familiarized with such topics either in the conference room or at the workplace. At the same time, a small proportion of respondents (35% for both the conference room and the workstation) confirmed that they were familiar with the quality objectives of the organization.

In the case of familiarizing employees with the consequences of quality errors for the organization in the conference room, this was raised only in the opinion of a small percentage of respondents (12%), while the situation is much better in the case of the workplace, where 53% of respondents declare obtaining information in this area. The temporary employees were also asked whether the organization informed them, during the implementation process, about the consequences of quality errors (that they may make) for the client, which is the risk of receiving a complaint. In this case, the results show that the organization pays more attention to it, but only in part of the implementation process (in the Conference Room). As many as



76% of respondents confirmed that they received information about the consequences of quality errors for the customer in the conference room. At the workplace, it was a much smaller percentage and amounted to only 35%.

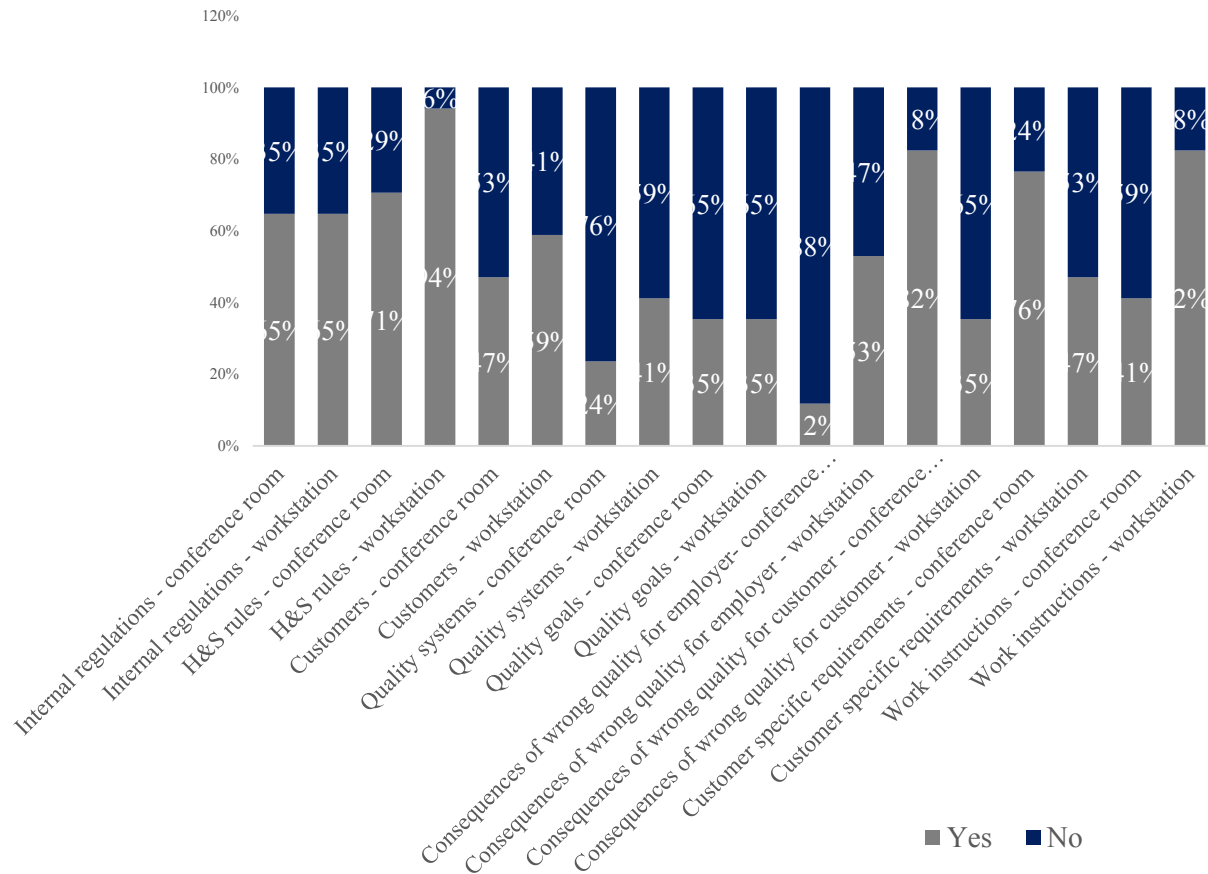
To a similar extent (47% and 41%), employees were familiarized with the specific requirements of customers in the so-called room and at the workplace.

In terms of familiarizing employees with work instructions, over 80% of employees confirmed that they had been familiarized with them, as part of the onboarding, at the workplace.

To sum up this rather broad question, it can be said that there is still a lot of work ahead of organizations in familiarizing new employees with elements related to broadly understood quality management. In my opinion, the results in this area (quality management system, quality objectives, internal consequences of quality errors, etc.) are far from expected for organizations that want to minimize the number of internal and external quality errors and use a temporary form of employment.

On the one hand, of course, organizations may not have provided this information at all (and this is where the results come from), but there may also be a situation that employees did not remember all the information provided to them as part of the onboarding process.

In the context of the first assumption, it would be necessary to think about the content provided during the implementation process (assuming that it occurs), namely what reasons cause the quality management aspects to be missing. With regard to the second assumption, it would be necessary to think about how the implementation process is planned in time and what information the organization prioritizes to provide. If quality information is treated superficially, among other topics, it may be treated as irrelevant and not remembered by employees as expected. This state of affairs can be confirmed by one of the answers given in the survey (as an opportunity to indicate comments) that there is an overload of information as part of the implementation process, considering the time that is devoted to it.

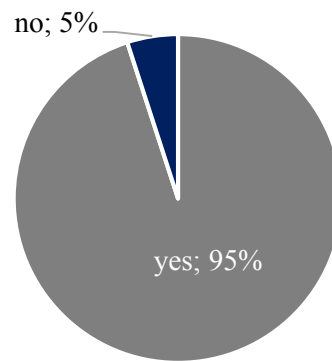


**Figure 2.** Content and place of onboarding process.

Source: Own study.

A good practice, used by some organizations when introducing a new employee to work, is to assign another employee with experience working for the employer (such a person is often referred to as a buddy). In the first phase of onboarding a new employee, the so-called buddy is a person who will be followed (by shadow) by observing how the buddy performs the work. After a defined time of such a process, the roles are reversed and it is the so-called buddy who observes how the onboarded person performs tasks at their workplace. The period of implementation of such a process can be very different, and it depends on the organization itself and the level of complexity of the tasks performed. In practice, it is usually a period of one to three months.

95% of the surveyed employees, when asked about the so-called buddy institution, confirmed that they received such a person during the implementation, which is presented in figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Presence of buddy.

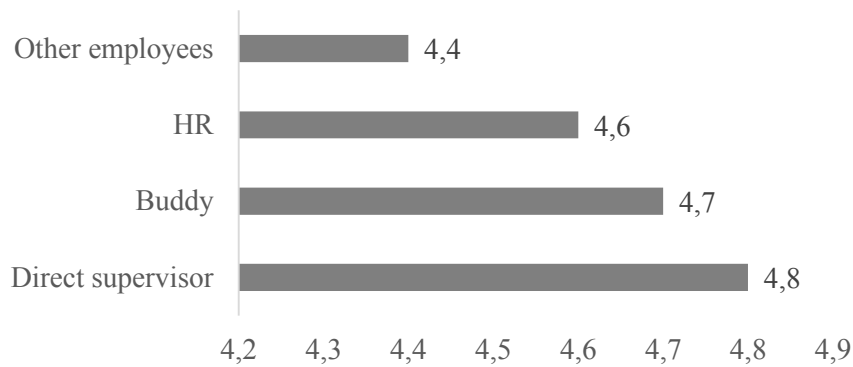
Source: Own study.

The process of onboarding a new employee usually involves a number of functions in the organization, not only the so-called buddy mentioned above. Of course, the implementation itself (as a process in the organization) is usually established and coordinated by human resources functions, with the supervisor playing the main role. However, from the point of view of establishing an effective and efficient implementation process, this will not take place without the participation of people managing employees, employees of occupational health and safety, quality, environment, technology, maintenance, etc. It is all these functions that should actively participate in establishing the program of such an implementation process and then carry out the individual modules of the implementation process.

In connection with this assumption, the surveyed temporary employees were asked about their assessment of the involvement of selected functions in the organization in the implementation process. Of course, this engagement refers to what the conservation employees were able to observe during their onboarding process (e.g., they were unable to observe engagement during the creation of the onboarding program). These functions include:

- human resources (HR),
- direct supervisor,
- buddy,
- other employees in the organization.

Figure 4 presents engagement indicators, measured by a weighted average (on a scale of 1-5).



**Figure 4.** Engagement in onboarding process.

Source: Own study.

As can be seen, through the data from Chart 4, the results of the involvement of individual functions in the process of onboarding a new employee are very similar and are characterized by a high level. This means that the indicated functions in the organization (HR, supervisor, buddy and other employees) were involved in the process in a similar way, in the opinion of the respondents. At the same time, the lowest engagement score was achieved by other employees of the organization, and the highest by superiors. A high result of supervisors' engagement shows that they are aware of the importance of their role in the onboarding of a new employee, which should later be reflected in fewer mistakes made during the performance of tasks. This, in turn, should translate into fewer qualitative internal and external inconsistencies. From the point of view of other employees in the organization and their involvement in the onboarding of a new employee, in the opinion of the authors of the article, the level of this commitment depends strongly on the employer's initiatives to appreciate the effort of onboarding new people. We are talking here, for example, about motivating bonuses for the onboarding of a new employee, for the effectiveness and efficiency of this onboarding, or joint bonuses depending on the result of the entire team, including new people. Individual allowances or team bonuses can certainly have a positive impact on the willingness and commitment to onboarding a new person.

As part of the possibility of submitting additional comments on the process of onboarding a temporary employee, the respondents indicated, in addition to the information overload mentioned above:

- communicating clear goals and expectations from superiors,
- too many explanations in specialist language, which is not clear to the new person,
- the need to adapt the onboarding process individually to a given person.

## 5. Summary

The implementation stage, as the next stage in the process of providing adequate human resources to perform the organization's tasks, is based on providing the employee with the first information about the organization and details of the work performed. The onboarding process usually takes place in the conference room, where the first information is provided (usually at a higher level of generality) and subsequently at the workstation. More detailed information is usually provided at the workplace and a practical implementation is also initiated. Various functions in the organization are involved in the onboarding process for a new employee, from human resources through engineering to the direct supervisor. The involvement of all functions affects the effectiveness and efficiency of this process. The aim is to introduce the temporary employee in such a way that he or she performs his or her work as required and thus ensures compliance of services for customers.

Based on the conducted research, the following aspects of the implementation process can be indicated:

- Taking into account the fact that 90% of the respondents underwent on-the-job training, including 60% additionally in the conference room, this is a good signal and such a practice should be continued in enterprises.
- The declared level of familiarization of a temporary employee with various aspects of quality management (both in the conference room and at the workplace) is not high and requires further analysis. On the one hand, the organizations may not have provided this information at all, and this is the result of the results obtained. On the other hand, there may be a situation that employees have not remembered all the information provided to them as part of the onboarding process (too large a set of information in a short time). You should think about the content you provide during the onboarding process, how the onboarding process is timed, and what information your organization prioritizes to convey.
- A good practice, used by some organizations when introducing a new employee to work, is to assign another employee with experience working for the employer (such a person is often referred to as a buddy). 95% of the surveyed employees, when asked about the so-called buddy institution, confirmed that they received such a person during the implementation.
- The results of the involvement of individual functions in the process of onboarding a new employee are very similar and are characterized by a high level. This means that the indicated functions in the organization (HR, supervisor, buddy and other employees) were similarly involved in the process in question. At the same time, the lowest engagement score was achieved by other employees of the organization, and the highest by superiors. From the point of view of other employees in the organization and their

commitment to the onboarding of a new employee, I believe that the level of this commitment depends strongly on the employer's initiatives to appreciate the effort of onboarding new people, and this is an area that the organization's representatives can work on.

In the literature one can find results of the research regarding the products or services quality and manpower influencing this level. However not so much focus has been put on the temporary employment. Considering that form of temporary employment is significant for Poland and other European countries (14.1% of workers aged 15-64 in the European Union were temporary workers while in Poland it was 26,9% in 2018) it means that this is an area worth of exploring (Eurostat, 2024). As it has been already mentioned the research conducted covered more processes of personnel management, that are subjected for further publishing, still this has been initial study. Thus, the results of the initial study might be subjected to further study, in a full scope. It can concern not only the polish labor market but also more European countries, where the share of temporary employment is significant. The limitation of the study was the analysis of the practice of just 25 employees in 3 companies. This also confirms that the full study will be worth of conducting.

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